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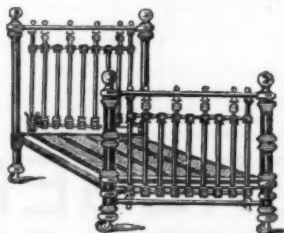
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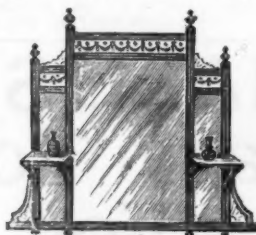


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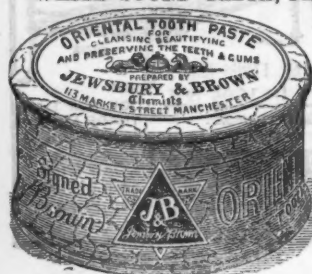
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APRIL 1887.

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AND ONE UMSLOPOGAAS.

BY H. RIDER HAGGARD, AUTHOR OF 'SHE,'
'KING SOLOMON'S MINES,' &c.

Ex Africa semper aliquid novi.

CHAPTER X.

THE ROSE OF FIRE.

ON we flew, drawn by the mighty current, till at last I noticed that the sound of the water was not half so deafening as it had been, and concluded that this must be because there was more room for the echoes to disperse in. I could now hear Alphonse's howls much more distinctly; they were made up of the oddest mixture of invocations to the Supreme Power and the name of his beloved Annette that it is possible to conceive; and, in short, though their evident earnestness saved them from profanity, were, to say the least, very remarkable.¹ Taking up a paddle I managed to drive it into his ribs, whereon he, thinking that the end had come,

¹ Sir Henry afterwards wrote down one of Alphonse's prayers as he overheard it. It ran thus: 'Oh, save me! Take me out of this hole! I will promise never to go exploring again! Oh, Annette, why did I leave thee? Oh, my false cousin! Oh, deliver me from this horrible main drain! Never mind the others! Let them drown; they are more used to it than I am, and they cannot cook! Oh Annette! Annette [*crescendo*]! Annette [*fortissimo*]!'

howled louder than ever. Then I slowly and cautiously raised myself on my knees and stretched my hand upwards, but could touch no roof. Next I took the paddle and lifted it above my head as high as I could, but with the same result. I also thrust it out laterally to the right and left, but could touch nothing except water. Then I bethought me that there was in the boat, amongst our other remaining possessions, a bull's-eye lantern and a tin of oil. I groped about and found it, and having a match on me carefully lit it, and as soon as the flame had got a hold of the wick I turned it on down the boat. As it happened, the first thing the light lit on was the white and scared face of Alphonse, who, thinking that it was all over at last, and that he was witnessing a preliminary celestial phenomenon, gave a terrific yell and was with difficulty reassured with the paddle. As for the other three, Good was lying on the flat of his back, his eyeglass still fixed in his eye, and gazing blankly into the upper darkness. Sir Henry had his head resting on the thwarts of the canoe, and with his hand was trying to test the speed of the water. But when the beam of light fell upon old Umslopogaas I could really have laughed. I think I have said that we had put a roast quarter of waterbuck into the canoe. Well, it so happened that when we all prostrated ourselves to avoid being swept out of the boat and into the water by the rock roof, Umslopogaas's head had come down uncommonly near this roast buck, and so soon as he had recovered a little from the first shock of our position it occurred to him that he was hungry. Thereupon he coolly cut off a chop with Inkosikaas, and was now employed in eating it with every appearance of satisfaction. As he afterwards explained, he thought that he was going 'on a long journey' and preferred to start on a full stomach. It reminded me of the people who are going to be hanged and who are generally reported in the English daily papers to have made 'an excellent breakfast.'

As soon as the others saw that I had managed to light up the lamp, we bundled Alphonse into the further end of the canoe with a threat which calmed him wonderfully, that if he would insist upon making the darkness hideous with his cries we would put him out of suspense by sending him to join the Wakwafi and wait for Annette in another sphere, and began to discuss the situation as well as we could. First, however, at Good's suggestion, we bound two paddles mast-fashion in the bows so that they might give us warning against any sudden lowering of the roof of the cave or waterway. It was clear to us that we were in an underground river or, as Alphonse had defined it, 'main drain,' which carried

off the superfluous waters of the lake. Such rivers are well known to exist in many parts of the world, but it has not often been the evil fortune of explorers to travel by them. That the river was wide we could clearly see, for the light from the bull's-eye lantern failed to reach from shore to shore, although occasionally, when the current swept us either to one side or the other, we could see the rock wall of the tunnel, which, as far as we could make out, appeared to arch about twenty-five feet above our heads. As for the current itself, it ran, Good estimated, at least eight knots, and, fortunately for us, was, as is usual, fiercest in the middle of the stream. Still, our first act was to arrange that one of us, with the lantern and a pole there was in the canoe, should always be in the bows ready, if possible, to prevent us from being stove in against the side of the cave or any projecting rock. Umslopogaas, having already dined, took the first turn. This was absolutely, with one exception, all that we could do towards preserving our safety. The exception was that another of us took up a position in the stern with a paddle by means of which it was possible to more or less steer the canoe and to keep her from the sides of the cave. These matters attended to, we made a somewhat sparing meal off the cold buck's meat (for we did not know how long it might have to last us), and then feeling in rather better spirits I gave my opinion that, serious as it undoubtedly was, I did not consider our position altogether without hope, unless, indeed, the natives were right, and the river plunged straight down into the bowels of the earth. If not, it was clear that it must emerge somewhere, probably on the other side of the mountains, and in that case all we had to think of was to keep ourselves alive till we got there, wherever 'there' might be. But, of course, as Good lugubriously pointed out, on the other hand we might fall victims to a hundred unsuspected horrors—or the river might go winding away inside the earth till it dried up, in which case our fate would indeed be an awful one.

'Well, let us hope for the best and prepare ourselves for the worst,' said Sir Henry, who is always cheerful and even spirited—a very tower of strength in the time of trouble. 'We have come out of so many queer scrapes together, that somehow I almost fancy we shall come out of this,' he added.

This was excellent advice, and we proceeded to take it each in our separate way—that is, except Alphonse, who had by now sunk into a sort of terrified stupor. Good was at the helm and Umslopogaas in the bows, so there was nothing left for Sir Henry and myself to do except to lie down in the canoe and think. It certainly

was a curious, and indeed almost a weird, position to be placed in—rushing along, as we were, through the bowels of the earth, borne on the bosom of a sort of Stygian river, something after the fashion of souls being ferried by Charon, as Curtis said. And how dark it was! the feeble ray from our little lamp did but serve to show the darkness. There in the bows sat old Umslopogaas, like Pleasure in the poem,¹ watchful and untiring, the pole ready to his hand, and behind in the shadow I could just make out the form of Good peering forward at the ray of light in order to make out how to steer with the paddle that he held and now and again dipped in the water.

‘Well, well,’ thought I, ‘you have come in search of adventures, Allan my boy, and you have certainly got them. At your time of life, too! you ought to be ashamed of yourself; but somehow you aren’t, and, awful as it all is, perhaps you will pull through after all; and if you don’t, why you can’t help it, you see! And when all’s said and done an underground river will make a very appropriate burying-place.’

At first, however, I am bound to say that the strain upon the nerves was very great. It is trying to the coolest and most experienced person not to know from one hour to another if he has five minutes more to live, but there is nothing in this world that one cannot get accustomed to, and in time we began to get accustomed even to that. And, after all, our anxiety, though no doubt natural, was, strictly speaking, illogical, seeing that we never know what is going to happen to us the next minute, even when we sit in a well-drained house with two policemen patrolling under the window—nor how long we have to live. It is all arranged for us, my sons, so what is the use of bothering?

It was nearly midday when we made our dive into darkness, and we had set our watch (Good and Umslopogaas) at two, having agreed that it should be of a duration of five hours. At seven o’clock accordingly, Sir Henry and I went on, Sir Henry at the bow and I at the stern, and the other two lay down and went to sleep. For three hours all went well, Sir Henry only finding it necessary to once push us off from the side; and I that but little steering was required to keep us straight, as the violent current did all that was needed, though occasionally the canoe showed a tendency which had to be guarded against to veer and travel broadside on. What struck me as the most curious thing about this wonderful river was: how did the air keep fresh? It

¹ Mr. Allan Quatermain misquotes—Pleasure sat at the helm.—EDITOR.

was muggy and thick, no doubt, but still not sufficiently so to render it bad or even remarkably unpleasant. The only explanation that I can suggest is that the water of the lake had sufficient air in it to keep the atmosphere of the tunnel from absolute stagnation, this air being given out as it proceeded on its headlong way. Of course I only give this solution of the mystery for what it is worth, which perhaps is not much.

When I had been for three hours or so at the helm, I began to notice a decided change in the temperature, which was getting warmer. At first I took no notice of it, but when, at the expiration of another half-hour, I found that it was getting hotter and hotter, I called to Sir Henry and asked him if he noticed it or if it was only my imagination. 'Noticed it!' he answered; 'I should think so. I am in a sort of Turkish bath.' Just about then the others woke up gasping, and were obliged to begin to discard their clothes. Here Umslopogaas had the advantage, for he did not wear any to speak of, except a moocha.

Hotter it grew, and hotter yet, till at last we could scarcely breathe, and the perspiration poured out of us. Half an hour more, and though we were all now stark naked, we could hardly bear it. The place was like an ante-chamber of the infernal regions proper. I dipped my hand into the water and drew it out almost with a cry; it was nearly boiling. We consulted a little thermometer we had—the mercury stood at 123. From the surface of the water rose a dense cloud of steam. Alphonse groaned out that we were already in purgatory, which indeed we were, though not in the sense that he meant it. Sir Henry suggested that we must be passing near the seat of some underground volcanic fire, and I am inclined to think, especially in the light of what subsequently occurred, that he was right. Our sufferings for some time after this really pass my powers of description. We no longer perspired, for all the perspiration had been sweated out of us. We simply lay in the bottom of the boat, which we were now physically incapable of directing, feeling like hot embers, and I fancy undergoing very much the same sensations that the poor fish do when they are dying on land, namely, that of slow suffocation. Our skin began to crack, and the blood to throb in our heads like the beating of a steam-engine.

This had been going on for some time, when suddenly the river turned a little, and I heard Sir Henry call out from the bows in a hoarse, startled voice, and, looking up, saw a most wonderful and awful thing. About half a mile ahead of us, and a little to

the left of the centre of the stream—which we could now see was about ninety feet broad—a huge pillar-like jet of almost white flame rose from the surface of the water and sprang fifty feet into the air, when it struck the roof and spread out some forty feet in diameter, falling back in curved sheets of fire shaped like the petals of a full-blown rose. Indeed this awful gas jet resembled nothing so much as a great flaming flower rising out of the black water. Below was the straight stalk, a foot or more thick, and above the dreadful bloom. And as for the fearfulness of it and its fierce and awesome beauty, who can describe it? Certainly I cannot. Although we were now some five hundred yards away, it, notwithstanding the steam, lit up the whole cavern as clear as day, and we could see that the roof was here about forty feet above us, and washed perfectly smooth with water. The rock was black, and here and there I could make out long shining lines of ore running through it like great veins, but of what metal they were I know not.

On we rushed towards this pillar of fire, which gleamed fiercer than any furnace ever lit by man.

‘Keep the boat to the right, Quatermain—to the right,’ shouted Sir Henry, and a minute afterwards I saw him fall forward senseless. Alphonse had already gone. Good was the next to go. There they lay as though dead; only Umslopogaas and I kept our senses. We were within fifty yards of it now, and I saw the Zulu’s head fall forward on his hands. He had gone, too, and I was alone. I could not breathe; the fierce heat dried me up. For yards and yards round the great rose of fire the rock roof was red-hot. The wood of the boat was almost burning. I saw the feathers on one of the dead swans begin to twist and shrivel up; but I would not give in. I knew that if I did we should pass within three or four yards of the gas jet and perish miserably. I set the paddle so as to turn the canoe as far from it as possible, and held on grimly.

My eyes seemed to be bursting from my head, and through my closed lids I could see the fierce light. We were nearly opposite now: it roared like all the fires of hell, and the water boiled furiously around it. Five seconds more. We were past; I heard the roar behind me.

Then I, too, fell senseless. The next thing that I remember was feeling a breath of air upon my face. My eyes opened with great difficulty. I looked up. Far, far above me there was light, though around me was deep gloom. Then I remembered and

looked. The canoe still floated down the river, and in the bottom of it lay the naked forms of my companions. 'Were they dead?' I wondered. 'Was I left alone in this awful place?' I knew not. Next I became conscious of a burning thirst. I put my hand over the edge of the boat into the water and drew it up again with a cry. No wonder: nearly all the skin was burnt off the back of it. The water, however, was cold, or nearly so, and I drank pints and splashed myself all over. My body seemed to suck up the fluid as one may see a brick wall suck up rain after a drought; but where I was burnt the touch of it caused intense pain. Then I bethought myself of the others, and, dragging myself towards them with difficulty, I sprinkled them with water, and to my joy they began to recover—Umslopogaas first, then the others. Next they drank, absorbing water like so many sponges. Then, feeling chilly—a queer contrast to our recent sensations—we began as best we could to get into our clothes. As we did so Good pointed to the port side of the canoe: it was all blistered with heat, and in places actually charred. Had it been built like our civilised boats, Good said that the planks would have certainly warped and let in enough water to sink us; but fortunately it was dug out of the soft, willowy wood of a single great tree, and had sides nearly three inches and a bottom four inches thick. What that awful flame was we never discovered, but I suppose that there was at this spot a crack or hole in the bed of the river through which a vast volume of gas forced its way from its volcanic home in the bowels of the earth towards the upper air. How it first became ignited it is, of course, impossible to say—probably, I should think, from some spontaneous explosion of mephitic gases.

As soon as we had got some things on and shaken ourselves together a little, we set to work to make out where we were now. I have said that there was light above, and on examination we found that it came from the sky. Our river that was, Sir Henry said, a literal realisation of the wild vision of the poet,¹ was no longer underground, but was running on its darksome way, not now through 'caverns measureless to man,' but between two frightful cliffs which cannot have been less than two thousand feet high. So high were they, indeed, that though the sky was above us, where we were was dense gloom—not darkness indeed, but

¹ In *Kubla Khan* a river ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.

the gloom of a room closely shuttered in the daytime. Up on either side rose the great straight cliffs, grim and forbidding, till the eye grew dizzy with trying to measure their sheer height. The little space of sky that marked where they ended lay like a thread of blue upon their soaring blackness, which was unrelieved by any tree or creeper. Here and there, however, grew ghostly patches of a long grey lichen, hanging motionless to the rock as the white beard to the chin of a dead man. It seemed as though only the dregs or heavier part of the light had sunk to the bottom of this awful place. No bright-winged sunbeam could fall so low: they died far, far above our heads.

By the river's edge was a little shore formed of round fragments of rock washed into this shape by the constant action of water, and giving the place the appearance of being strewn with thousands of fossil cannon balls. Evidently when the water of the underground river is high there is no beach at all, or very little, between the border of the stream and the precipitous cliffs; but now there was a space of seven or eight yards. And here, on this beach, we determined to land, in order to rest ourselves a little after all that we had gone through and to stretch our limbs. It was a dreadful place, but it would give an hour's respite from the terrors of the river, and also allow of our repacking and arranging the canoe. Accordingly we selected what looked like a favourable spot, and with some little difficulty managed to beach the canoe and scramble out on to the round, inhospitable pebbles.

'My word,' called out Good, who was on shore the first, 'what an awful place! it's enough to give one a fit.' And he laughed.

Instantly a thundering voice took up his words, magnifying them a hundred times. '*Give one a fit—Ho! ho! ho!*'—'*A fit, Ho! ho! ho!*' answered another voice in wild accents from far up the cliff—'*a fit! a fit! a fit!*' chimed in voice after voice—each flinging the words to and fro with shouts of awful laughter to the invisible lips of the other till the whole place echoed with the words and with shrieks of fiendish merriment, which at last ceased as suddenly as they had begun.

'Oh, mon Dieu!' yelled Alphonse, startled quite out of such self-command as he possessed.

'*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*' the Titanic echoes thundered, shrieked, and wailed in every conceivable tone.

'Ah,' said Umslopogaas calmly, 'I clearly perceive that devils live here. Well, the place looks like it.'

I tried to explain to him that the cause of all the hubbub was

a very remarkable and interesting echo, but he would not believe it.

'Ah,' he said, 'I know an echo when I hear one. There was one lived opposite my kraal in Zululand, and the Intombis [maidens] used to talk with it. But if what we hear is a full-grown echo, mine at home can only have been a baby. No, no—they are devils up there. But I don't think much of them, though,' he added, taking a pinch of snuff. 'They can copy what one says, but they don't seem to be able to talk on their own account, and they dare not show their faces,' and he relapsed into silence, and apparently paid no further attention to such contemptible fiends.

After this we found it necessary to keep our conversation down to a whisper—for it was really unbearable to have every word one uttered tossed to and fro like a tennis-ball, as precipice called to precipice.

But even our whispers ran up the rocks in mysterious murmurs till at last they died away in long-drawn sighs of sound. Echoes are delightful and romantic things, but we had more than enough of them in that dreadful gulf.

As soon as we had settled ourselves a little on the round stones, we proceeded to wash ourselves and dress our burns as well as we could. As we had but a little oil for the lantern, we could not spare any for this purpose, so we skinned one of the swans and used the fat off its breast, which proved an excellent substitute. Then we repacked the canoe, and finally proceeded to take some food, of which I need scarcely say we were in need, for our insensibility had endured for many hours, and it was, as our watches showed, mid-day. Accordingly we seated ourselves in a circle, and were soon engaged in discussing our cold meat with such appetite as we could muster, which, in my case at any rate, was not much, as I felt sick and faint after my sufferings of the previous night, and had besides a racking headache. It was a curious meal. The gloom was so intense that we could scarcely see the way to cut our food and convey it to our mouths. Still we got on pretty well, although the meat was tainted by the heat through which it had passed, till I happened to look behind me—my attention being attracted by a noise of something crawling over the stones, and perceived sitting upon a rock in my immediate rear a huge species of black freshwater crab, only it was five times the size of any crab I ever saw. This hideous and loathsome-looking animal had projecting eyes that seemed to glare at

one, very long and flexible antennæ or feelers, and gigantic claws. Nor was I especially favoured with its company. From every quarter dozens of these horrid brutes were creeping up, drawn, I suppose, by the smell of the food, from between the round stones and out of holes in the precipice. Some were already quite close to us. I stared quite fascinated by the unusual sight, and as I did so I saw one of the beasts stretch out its huge claw and give the unsuspecting Good such a nip behind that he jumped up with a howl, and set the 'wild echoes flying' in sober earnest. Just then, too, another, a very large one, got hold of Alphonse's leg, and declined to part with it, and, as may be imagined, a considerable scene ensued. Umslopogaas took his axe and cracked the shell of one with the flat of it, whereon it set up a horrid sort of screaming which the echoes multiplied a thousandfold, and began to foam at the mouth, a proceeding that drew hundreds more of its friends out of unsuspected holes and corners. Those on the spot perceiving that the animal was hurt fell upon it like creditors on a bankrupt, and literally rent it limb from limb with their huge pincers and devoured it, using their claws to convey the fragments to their mouths. Seizing whatever weapons were handy, such as stones or paddles, we commenced a war upon the monsters—whose numbers were increasing by leaps and bounds, and whose stench was overpowering. So fast as we cracked their armour others seized the injured ones and devoured them, foaming at the mouth, and screaming as they did so. Nor did the brutes stop at that. When they could they nipped hold of us—and awful nips they were—or tried to steal the meat. One enormous fellow got hold of the swan we had skinned and began to drag it off. Instantly a score of others flung themselves upon the prey, and then began a ghastly and disgusting scene. How the monsters foamed and screamed, and rent the flesh, and each other! It was a sickening and unnatural sight, and one that will haunt all who saw it till their dying day—enacted as it was in the deep, oppressive gloom, and set to the unceasing music of the many-toned nerve-shaking echoes. Strange as it may seem to say so, there was something so shockingly human about these fiendish creatures—it was as though all the most evil passions and desires of man had got into the shell of a magnified crab and gone mad. They were so dreadfully courageous and intelligent, and they looked as if they *understood*. The whole scene might have furnished material for another canto of Dante's 'Inferno,' as Curtis said.

'I say, you fellows, let's get out of this or we shall all go off our heads,' sung out Good; and we were not slow to take the hint. Pushing the canoe, around which the animals were now crawling by hundreds and making vain attempts to climb, off the rocks, we bundled into it and got out into mid-stream, leaving behind us the fragments of our meal and the screaming, foaming, stinking mass of monsters in full possession of the grounds.

'Those are the devils of the place,' said Umslopogaas with the air of one who has solved a problem, and upon my word I felt almost inclined to agree with him.

Umslopogaas's remarks were like his axe—very much to the point.

'What's to be done next?' said Sir Henry blankly.

'Drift, I suppose,' I answered, and we drifted accordingly. All the afternoon and well into the evening we floated on in the gloom beneath the far-off line of blue sky, scarcely knowing when day ended and night began, for down in that vast gulf the difference was not marked, till at length Good pointed out a star hanging right above us, which, having nothing better to do, we observed with great interest. Suddenly it vanished, the darkness became intense, and a familiar murmuring sound filled the air. 'Underground again,' I said with a groan, holding up the lamp. Yes, there was no doubt about it. I could just make out the roof. The chasm had come to an end and the tunnel had recommenced. And then began another long, long night of danger and horror. To describe all its incidents would be too wearisome, so I will simply say that about midnight we struck on a flat projecting rock in mid-stream and were as nearly as possible overturned and drowned. However, at last we got off, and proceeded upon the uneven tenor of our way. And so the hours passed till it was nearly three o'clock. Sir Henry, Good, and Alphonse were asleep, utterly worn out; Umslopogaas was at the bow with the pole, and I was steering when I perceived that the rate at which we were travelling had perceptibly increased. Then, suddenly, I heard Umslopogaas make an exclamation, and next second came a sound as of parting branches, and I became aware that the canoe was being forced through hanging bushes or creepers. Another minute, and a breath of sweet open air fanned my face, and I felt that we had emerged from the tunnel and were floating upon clear water. I say felt, for I could see nothing, the darkness being absolutely pitchy, as it often is just before the dawn. But even this could scarcely damp my joy. We were out of that dreadful

river, and wherever we might have got to this at least was something to be thankful for. And so I sat down and inhaled the sweet night air and waited for the dawn with such patience as I could command.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FROWNING CITY.

FOR an hour or more I sat waiting (Umslopogaas having meanwhile gone to sleep also) till at length the east turned grey, and huge misty shapes moved over the surface of the water like ghosts of long-forgotten dawns. They were the vapours rising from their watery bed to greet the sun. Then the grey turned to primrose, and the primrose grew to red. Next, glorious bars of light sprang up across the eastern sky, and through them the radiant messengers of the dawn came speeding upon their arrowy way, scattering the ghostly vapours and awaking the mountains with a kiss, as they flew from range to range and longitude to longitude. Another moment, and the golden gates were open and the sun himself came forth as a bridegroom from his chamber, with pomp and glory and a flashing as of ten million spears, and embraced the night and covered her with brightness, and it was day.

But as yet I could see nothing save the beautiful blue sky above, for over the water was a thick layer of mist exactly as though the whole surface had been covered with billows of cotton wool. By degrees, however, the sun sucked up the mists, and then I saw that we were afloat upon a glorious sheet of blue water of which I could not make out the shore. Some eight or ten miles behind us, however, there stretched as far as the eye could reach a range of precipitous hills that formed a retaining wall of the lake, and I have no doubt but that it was through some entrance in these hills that the subterranean river found its way into the open water. Indeed, I afterwards ascertained this to be the fact, and it will be some indication of the extraordinary strength and directness of the current of the mysterious river that the canoe, even at this distance, was still answering to it. Presently, too, I, or rather Umslopogaas, who woke up just then, discovered another indication, and a very unpleasant one it was. Perceiving some whitish object upon the water, Umslopogaas called my attention to it, and with a few strokes of the paddle brought the canoe

to the spot, whereupon we discovered that the object was the body of a man floating face downwards. This was bad enough, but imagine my horror when, Umslopogaas having turned him on to his back with the paddle, we recognised in the sunken features the lineaments of——whom do you suppose? None other than our poor servant who had been sucked down two days before in the waters of the subterranean river. It gave me quite a turn. I thought that we had left him behind for ever, and behold! borne by the current, he had made the awful journey with us, and with us had reached the end. His appearance also was very dreadful. He had been a black man, now he was a livid white, for the boiling water had scalded off nearly all his outer skin. Also he bore traces of having touched the pillar of fire—one arm being completely shrivelled up and all his hair being burnt off. The features were, as I have said, sunken, and yet they preserved upon them that awful look of despair that I had seen upon his living face as the poor fellow was sucked down. Really the sight quite unnerved me, weary and shaken as I felt with all that we had gone through, and I was heartily glad when suddenly and without any warning the body began to sink just as though it had had a mission, which having been accomplished, it retired; the real reason no doubt being that turning it on its back allowed a free passage to the gas. Down it went into the transparent depths—fathom after fathom we could trace its course till at last a long line of bright air-bubbles, swiftly chasing each other to the surface, alone remained where it had passed. At length these, too, were gone, and that was an end of our poor servant. Umslopogaas thoughtfully watched the body vanish.

‘What did he follow us for?’ he asked. ‘’Tis an ill omen for thee and me, Macumazahn.’ And he laughed.

I turned on him angrily, for I dislike these unpleasant suggestions. If people have such ideas, they ought in common decency to keep them to themselves. I detest individuals who make one the subject of their disagreeable presentiments, or who, when they dream that they saw one hanged as a common felon, or some such horror, will insist upon telling one all about it at breakfast, even if they have to get up early to do it.

Just then, however, the others woke up and began to rejoice exceedingly at finding that we were out of that dreadful river and once more beneath the blue sky. Then followed a babel of talk and suggestions as to what we were to do next, the upshot of all of which was that as we were excessively hungry, and had nothing

whatsoever left to eat except a few scraps of biltong (dried game-flesh), having abandoned all that remained of our provisions to those horrible freshwater crabs, we determined to make for the shore. But now a new difficulty arose. We did not know where the shore was, and, with the exception of the cliffs through which the subterranean river made its entry, could see nothing but a wide expanse of sparkling blue water. Observing, however, that the long flights of aquatic birds kept flying from our left, we concluded that they were advancing from their feeding-grounds on shore to pass the day in the lake, and accordingly headed the boat towards the quarter whence they came, and began to paddle. Before long, however, a stiffish breeze sprang up, blowing directly in the direction we wanted, so we improvised a sail with a blanket and the pole, which took us along merrily. This done, we proceeded to devour the remnants of our biltong, washed down with the sweet lake water, and then lit our pipes and awaited whatever might turn up.

When we had been sailing for an hour, Good, who was searching the horizon with the spy-glass, suddenly announced joyfully that he saw land, and pointed out that, from the change in the colour of the water, he thought we must be approaching the mouth of a river. In another minute we perceived a great golden dome, not unlike that of St. Paul's, piercing the morning mists, and while we were wondering what in the world it could be, Good reported another and still more important discovery, namely, that a small sailing-boat was advancing towards us. This bit of news, which we were very shortly able to verify with our own eyes, threw us into a considerable flutter. That the natives of this unknown lake should understand the art of sailing seemed to suggest that they possessed some degree of civilisation. In a few more minutes it became evident that the occupant or occupants of the advancing boat had made us out. For a moment or two she hung in the wind as though in doubt, and then came tacking towards us with great swiftness. In ten more minutes she was within a hundred yards, and we saw that she was a neat little boat—not a canoe 'dug out,' but built more or less in the European fashion with planks, and carrying a singularly large sail for her size. But our attention was soon diverted from the boat to her crew, which consisted of a man and woman, *nearly as white as ourselves*.

We stared at each other in amazement, thinking that we must be mistaken; but no, there was no doubt about it. They were not fair, but the two people in the boat were decidedly of a white

as distinguished from a black race, as white, for instance, as Spaniards or Italians. It was a patent fact. So it was true, after all; and, mysteriously led by a Power beyond our own, we had discovered this wonderful people. I could have shouted for joy when I thought of the glory and the wonder of the thing; and as it was, we all shook hands and congratulated each other on the unexpected success of our wild search. All my life had I heard rumours of a white race that existed in the highlands of the interior of this vast continent, and longed to put them to the proof, and now here I saw it with my own eyes, and was dumb-founded. Truly, as Sir Henry said, the old Roman was right when he wrote '*Ex Africa semper aliquid novi*,' which he tells me means that out of Africa there always comes some new thing.

The man in the boat was of a good but not particularly fine physique, and possessed straight black hair, regular aquiline features, and an intelligent face. He was dressed in a sort of brown cloth garment, something like a flannel shirt without the sleeves, and in an unmistakable kilt of the same material. The legs and feet were bare. Round the right arm and left leg he wore thick rings of yellow metal that I judged to be gold. The woman had a sweet face, wild and shy, with large eyes and curling brown hair. Her dress was made of the same material as the man's, and consisted, as we afterwards discovered, first of a linen under-garment that hung down to her knee, and then of a single long strip of cloth, about four feet wide by fifteen long, which was wound round the body in graceful folds and finally flung over the left shoulder so that the end, which was dyed blue or purple or some other colour, according to the social standing of the wearer, hung down in front, the right arm and breast being, however, left quite bare. A more becoming dress, especially when, as in the present case, the wearer was young and pretty, it is quite impossible to conceive. Good (who has an eye for such things) was greatly struck with it, and so indeed was I. It was so simple and yet so effective.

Meanwhile, if we had been astonished at the appearance of the man and woman, it was clear that they were far more astonished at us. As for the man, he appeared to be overcome with fear and wonder, and for a while hovered round our canoe, but would not approach. At last, however, he came within hailing distance, and called to us in a language that sounded soft and pleasing enough, but of which we could not understand one word. So we hailed back in English, French, Latin, Greek, German, Zulu, Dutch,

Sisutu, Kukuana, and a few other native dialects that I am acquainted with, but our visitor did not understand any of these tongues; indeed, they appeared to bewilder him. As for the lady, she was busily employed in taking stock of us, and Good was returning the compliment by staring at her hard through his eyeglass, a proceeding that she seemed rather to enjoy than otherwise. At length the man, being unable to make anything out of us, suddenly headed his boat round and began to head off for the shore, his little boat skimming away before the wind like a swallow. As she passed across our bows the man turned to attend to the large sail, and Good promptly took the opportunity to kiss his hand to the young lady. I was horrified at this proceeding, both on general grounds and because I feared she might take offence, but to my delight she did not, for, first glancing round and seeing that her husband, or brother, or whoever it was, was engaged, she promptly kissed hers back.

'Ah!' said I. 'It seems that we have at last found a language that the people of this country understand.'

'In which case,' said Sir Henry, 'Good will prove an invaluable interpreter.'

I frowned, for I do not approve of Good's frivolities, and he knows it, and turned the conversation to more serious subjects. 'It is very clear to me,' I said, 'that that man will be back before long with a host of his fellows, so we had best make up our minds as to how we are going to receive them.'

'The question is how will they receive us,' said Sir Henry.

As for Good he made no remark, but began to extract a small square tin case that had accompanied us in all our wanderings from under a pile of things. Now we had often remonstrated with Good about this tin case, inasmuch as it had been an awkward thing to carry, and he had never given any very explicit account as to its contents; but he had insisted on sticking to it, saying mysteriously that it might come in very useful one day.

'What on earth are you going to do, Good?' asked Sir Henry.

'Do—why dress, of course! You don't expect me to appear in a new country in these things, do you?' and he pointed to his soiled and worn garments, which were however, like all Good's things, very tidy, and with every tear neatly mended.

We said no more, but watched his proceedings with breathless interest. His first step was to get Alphonse, who was thoroughly competent in such matters, to trim his hair and beard in the most

approved fashion. I think that if he had had some hot water and a cake of soap handy he would have shaved off the latter; but he had not. This done, he suggested that we should lower the sail of the canoe and all take a bath, which we did, greatly to the horror and astonishment of Alphonse, who lifted his hands and ejaculated that these English were indeed a wonderful people. Umslopogaas, who though he was, like most high-bred Zulus, scrupulously cleanly in his person, did not see the fun of swimming about in a lake, also regarded the proceeding with mild amusement. We got back into the canoe much refreshed by the cold water, and sat to dry in the sun, whilst Good undid his tin box, and produced first a beautiful clean white shirt, just as it had left a London steam laundry, and then some garments wrapped first in brown, then in white, and finally in silver paper. We watched this undoing with the tenderest interest and much speculation. One by one Good removed the dull husks that hid their splendours, carefully folding and replacing each piece of paper as he did so; and there at last lay, in all the majesty of its gold epaulettes, lace, and buttons, a Commander of the Royal Navy's full-dress uniform—dress sword, cocked hat, shiny patent leather boots and all. We literally gasped.

'What!' we said, '*what!* Are you going to put those things on?'

'Certainly,' he answered composedly; 'you see so much depends upon a first impression, especially,' he added, 'as I observe that there are ladies about. One at least of us ought to be decently dressed.'

We said no more; we were simply dumbfounded, especially when we considered the artful way in which Good had concealed the contents of that box for all these months. Only one suggestion did we make, namely, that he should wear his mail shirt next his skin. He replied that he feared it would spoil the set of his coat, now carefully spread in the sun to take the creases out, but finally consented to this precautionary measure. The most amusing part of the affair, however, was to see old Umslopogaas's astonishment and Alphonse's delight at Good's transformation. When at last he stood up in all his glory, even down to the medals on his breast, and contemplated himself in the still waters of the lake, after the fashion of the young gentleman in ancient history, whose name I can't remember, but who fell in love with his own shadow, the old Zulu could no longer restrain his feelings.

'Oh, Bougwan!' he said. 'Oh, Bougwan! I always thought

thee an ugly little man, and fat—fat as the cows at calving time ; and now thou art like a blue jay when he spreads his tail out. Surely, Bougwan, it hurts my eyes to look at thee.'

Good did not much like this allusion to his fat, which, to tell the truth, was not very well deserved, for hard exercise had brought him down four inches ; but on the whole he was pleased at Umslopogaas's admiration. As for Alphonse, he was quite delighted.

'Ah ! but Monsieur has the beautiful air—the air of the warrior. It is the ladies who will say so when we come to get ashore. Monsieur is complete ; he puts me in mind of my heroic grand——'

Here we stopped Alphonse.

As we gazed upon these beauties thus revealed by Good, a spirit of emulation filled our breasts, and we set to work to get ourselves up as well as we could. The most, however, that we were able to do was to array ourselves in our spare suits of shooting clothes, of which we each had one, keeping on our mail shirts underneath. As for my appearance, all the fine clothes in the world could never make it otherwise than scrubby and insignificant ; but Sir Henry looked what he is, a magnificent man in his nearly new tweed suit, gaiters, and boots. Alphonse also got himself up to kill, giving an extra turn to his enormous moustaches. Even old Umslopogaas, who was not in a general way given to the vain adorning of his body, got hold of some oil out of the lantern and a bit of tow, and polished up his head-ring with it till it shone like Good's patent leather boots. Then he put on the mail shirt Sir Henry had given him and his 'moocha,' and, having cleaned up Inkosi-kaas a little, stood forth complete.

All this while we had, having hoisted the sail again as soon as we had bathed, been progressing steadily for the land, or, rather, for the mouth of a great river. Presently—in all about an hour and a half after the little boat had left us—we saw emerging from the river or harbour a large number of boats, ranging up to ten or twelve tons burden. One of these was propelled by twenty-four oars, and most of the rest sailed. Looking through the glass we soon made out that the row-boat was an official vessel, her crew being all dressed in a sort of uniform, whilst on the half-deck forward stood an old man of venerable appearance, and with a flowing white beard, and a sword strapped to his side, who was evidently the commander of the craft. The other boats were apparently occupied by people drawn out of curiosity, and were rowing or sailing towards us as quickly as they could.

'Now for it,' said I. 'What is the betting? Are they going to be friendly or to put an end to us?'

Nobody could answer this question, and, not liking the warlike appearance of the old gentleman and his sword, we felt a little anxious.

Just then Good spied a school of hippopotami on the water about two hundred yards off us, and suggested that it would not be a bad plan to impress the natives with a sense of our power by shooting some of them if possible. This, unluckily enough, struck us as a good idea, and accordingly we at once got out our eight-bore rifles, for which we still had a few cartridges left, and prepared for action. There were four of the animals, a big bull, a cow, and two young ones, one three parts grown. We got up to them without difficulty, the great animals contenting themselves with sinking down into the water and rising again a few yards farther on; indeed, their excessive tameness struck me as being peculiar. When the advancing boats were about five hundred yards away, Sir Henry opened the ball by firing at the three-parts grown young one. The heavy bullet struck it fair between the eyes, and, crashing through the skull, killed it, and it sank, leaving a long train of blood behind it. At the same moment I fired at the cow and Good at the old bull. My shot took effect, but not fatally, and down went the hippopotamus with a prodigious splashing, only to rise again presently blowing and grunting furiously, dyeing all the water round her crimson, when I killed her with the left barrel. Good, who is an execrable shot, missed the head of the bull altogether, the bullet merely cutting the side of his face as it passed. On glancing up, after I had fired my second shot, I perceived that the people we had fallen among were evidently ignorant of the nature of firearms, for the consternation caused by our shots and their effect upon the animals was prodigious. Some of the parties in the boats began to cry out with fear; others turned and made off as hard as they could; and even the old gentleman with the sword looked greatly puzzled and alarmed, and halted his big row-boat. We had, however, but little time for observation, for just then the old bull, rendered furious by the wound he had received, rose fair within forty yards of us, glaring savagely. We all fired, and hit him in various places, and down he went, badly wounded. Curiosity now began to overcome the fear of the onlookers, and some of them sailed on up close to us, amongst these being the man and woman whom we had first seen a couple of hours or so before, who drew up almost

alongside. Just then the great brute rose again within ten yards of their boat, and instantly with a roar of fury made at it open-mouthed. The woman shrieked, and the man tried to give the boat way, but without success. In another second I saw the huge red jaws and gleaming ivories close with a crunch on the frail craft, taking an enormous mouthful out of its side and capsizing it. Down went the boat, leaving its occupants struggling in the water. Next moment, before we could do anything towards saving them, the huge and furious creature was up again and making open-mouthed at the poor girl, who was struggling in the water. Lifting my rifle just as the grinding jaws were about to close on her, I fired over her head right down the hippopotamus's throat. Over he went, and commenced turning round and round, snorting, and blowing red streams of blood through his nostrils. Before he could recover himself, however, I let him have the other barrel in the side of the throat, and that finished him. He never moved or struggled again, but instantly sank. Our next effort was directed towards saving the girl, the man having swum off towards another boat; and in this we were fortunately successful, pulling her into the canoe (amidst the shouts of the spectators) considerably exhausted and frightened, but otherwise unhurt.

Meanwhile the boats had gathered together at a distance, and we could see that their occupants, who were evidently much frightened, were consulting what to do. Without giving them time for further consideration, which we thought might result unfavourably to ourselves, we instantly took our paddles and advanced towards them, Good standing in the bow and taking off his cocked hat politely in every direction, his amiable features suffused by a bland but intelligent smile. Most of the craft retreated as we advanced, but a few held their ground, while the big row-boat came on to meet us. Presently we were alongside, and I could see that our appearance—and especially Good's and Umslopogaas's—filled the venerable-looking commander with astonishment, not unmixed with awe. He was dressed after the same fashion as the man we first met, except that his shirt was not made of brown cloth, but of pure white linen hemmed with purple. The kilt, however, was identical, and so were the thick rings of gold around the arm and beneath the left knee. The rowers wore only a kilt, their bodies being naked to the waist. Good took off his hat to the old gentleman with an extra flourish, and inquired after his health in the purest English, to which he replied by laying the first two fingers of his right hand horizon-

tally across his lips and holding them there for a moment, which we took as his method of salutation. Then he also addressed some remarks to us in the same soft accents that had distinguished our first interviewer, which we were forced to indicate we did not understand by shaking our heads and shrugging our shoulders. This last Alphonse, being to the manner born, did to perfection, and in so polite a way that nobody could take any offence. Then we came to a standstill, till I, being exceedingly hungry, thought I might as well call attention to the fact, and did so first by opening my mouth and pointing down it, and then rubbing my stomach. These signals the old gentleman clearly understood, for he nodded his head vigorously, and pointed towards the harbour; and at the same time one of the men on his boat threw us a line and motioned to us to make it fast, which we did. The row-boat then took us in tow, and proceeded with great rapidity towards the mouth of the river, accompanied by all the other boats. In about twenty minutes more we reached the entrance to the harbour, which was crowded with boats full of people who had come out to see us. We observed that all the occupants were more or less of the same type, though some were fairer than others. Indeed, we noticed certain ladies whose skin was of a most dazzling whiteness; and the darkest shade of colour which we saw was about that of a rather swarthy Spaniard. Presently the wide river gave a sweep, and when it did so an exclamation of astonishment and delight burst from our lips as we caught our first view of the place that we afterwards knew as Milosis, or the Frowning City (from the prefix *mi*, which means city, and *losis*, a frown).

At a distance of some five hundred yards from the river's bank rose a sheer precipice of granite, two hundred feet or so in height, which had no doubt once formed the bank itself—the intermediate space of land now utilised as docks and roadways having been gained by draining, and deepening and embanking the stream.

On the brow of this precipice stood a great building of the same granite that formed the cliff, built on three sides of a square, the fourth side being open, save for a kind of battlement pierced at its base by a little door. This imposing place we afterwards discovered was the palace of the queen, or rather of the queens. At the back of the palace the town sloped gently upwards to a flashing building of white marble, crowned by the golden dome which we had already observed. The city was, with the exception of this one building, entirely built of red granite, and laid out in

regular blocks with splendid roadways between. So far as we could see also the houses were all one-storied and detached, with gardens round them, which gave some relief to the eye wearied with the sight of red granite. At the back of the palace a road of extraordinary width stretched away up the hill for a distance of a mile and a half or so, and appeared to terminate at an open space surrounding the gleaming building that crowned the hill. But right in front of us was the crowning wonder and glory of Milosis—the great staircase of the palace, the magnificence of which fairly took our breath away. Let the reader imagine, if he can, a splendid stairway, sixty-five feet from balustrade to balustrade, consisting of two vast flights, each of one hundred and twenty-five steps of eight inches in height by three feet broad, connected by a flat resting-place sixty feet in length, and running from the palace wall on the edge of the precipice down to meet a waterway or canal cut to its foot from the river. This marvellous staircase was supported upon a single enormous granite arch, of which the resting-place between the two flights formed the crown; that is, the connecting open space lay upon it. From this archway sprang a subsidiary flying arch, or rather something that resembled a flying arch in shape, such as none of us had seen in any other country, and of which the beauty and wonder surpassed all that we had ever imagined. Three hundred feet from point to point, and no less than five hundred and fifty round the curve, that half-arc soared touching the bridge it supported for a space of fifty feet only, one end resting on and built into the parent archway, and the other embedded in the solid granite of the side of the precipice.

This staircase with its supports was, indeed, a work of which any living man might have been proud, both on account of its magnitude and its surpassing beauty. Four times, as we afterwards learnt, did the work, which was commenced in remote antiquity, fail, and was then abandoned for three centuries when half-finished, till at last there arose a youthful engineer named Rademas, who said that he would complete it successfully, and staked his life upon it. If he failed he was to be hurled from the precipice he had undertaken to scale, if he succeeded he was to be rewarded by the hand of the king's daughter. Five years was given to him to complete the work, and an unlimited supply of labour and material. Three times did his arch fall, till at last, seeing failure to be inevitable, he determined to commit suicide on the morrow of the third collapse. That night, however, a beautiful woman came to him in a dream and touched his fore-

head, and of a sudden he saw a vision of the completed work, and saw too through the masonry and how the difficulties connected with the flying arch that had hitherto baffled his genius were to be overcome. Then he awoke and once more commenced the work, but on a different plan, and behold! he achieved it, and on the last day of the five years he led the princess his bride up the stair and into the palace. And in due course he became king by right of his wife, and founded the present Zu-vendi dynasty, which is to this day called the 'House of the Stairway,' thus proving once more how energy and talent are the natural stepping-stones to grandeur. And to commemorate his triumph he fashioned a statue of himself dreaming, and of the fair woman who touched him on the forehead, and placed it in the great hall of the palace, and there it stands to this day.

Such was the great stair of Milosis, and such the city beyond. No wonder they called it the 'Frowning City,' for certainly those mighty works in solid granite did seem to frown down upon our littleness in their sombre splendour. This was so even in the sunshine, but when the storm-clouds gathered on her imperial brow Milosis looked more like a supernatural dwelling-place, or some imagining of a poet's brain, than what she is—a mortal city, carven by the patient genius of generations out of the red silence of the mountain-side.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SISTER QUEENS.

THE big rowing-boat proceeded on up the cutting that ran almost to the foot of the vast stairway, and then halted at a flight of steps leading to the landing-place. Here the old gentleman disembarked, and invited us to do likewise, which, having no alternative, and being nearly starved, we did without hesitation—taking our rifles with us, however. As each of us landed, our guide again laid his fingers on his lips in salutation and bowed deeply, at the same time ordering back the crowds who had assembled to gaze on us. The last to leave the canoe was the girl we had picked out of the water, for whom her companion was waiting. Before she went away she kissed my hand, I suppose as a token of gratitude for having saved her from the fury of the

hippopotamus; and it seemed to me that she had by this time quite got over any fear she might have had of us, and was by no means anxious to return in such a hurry to her lawful owners. At any rate, she was going to kiss Good's hand as well as mine, when the young man interfered and led her off. As soon as we were on shore, a number of the men who had rowed the big boat took possession of our few goods and chattels, and started with them up the splendid staircase, our guide indicating to us by means of motions that the things were perfectly safe. This done, he turned to the right and led the way to a small house, which was, as I afterwards discovered, an inn. Entering straight into a good-sized room we, saw that a wooden table was already furnished with food, presumably in preparation for us. Here our guide motioned us to be seated on a bench that ran the length of the table. We did not require a second invitation, but at once fell to ravenously on the viands before us, which were served on wooden platters, and consisted of cold goat's-flesh, wrapped up in some kind of leaf that gave it a delicious flavour, green vegetables resembling lettuces, brown bread, and red wine poured from a skin into horn mugs. This wine was peculiarly soft and good, having something of the flavour of Burgundy. Twenty minutes after we sat down at that hospitable board we rose from it, feeling like new men. After all that we had gone through we needed two things, food and rest, and the food of itself was a great blessing to us. Two girls of the same charming cast of face as the first whom we had seen waited on us while we ate, and very nicely they did it. They were also dressed in the same fashion, namely, in a white linen petticoat coming to the knee, and with the toga-like garment of brown cloth, leaving bare the right arm and breast. I afterwards found out that this was the national dress, and regulated by an iron custom, though of course subject to variations. Thus, if the petticoat was pure white, it signified that the wearer was unmarried; if white, with a straight purple stripe round the edge, that she was married and a first or legal wife; if with a wavy purple stripe, that she was a second or other wife; if with a black stripe, that she was a widow. In the same way the toga or 'kaf,' as they call it, was of different shades of colour, from pure white to the deepest brown, according to the rank of the wearer, and embroidered at the end in various ways. This also applies to the 'shirts' or tunics worn by the men, which varied in material and colour; but the kilts were always the same except as regards quality. One thing, however, every man and woman in the

country wore as the national insignia, and that was the thick band of gold round the right arm above the elbow, and the left leg above the knee. People of high rank also wore a torque of gold round the neck, and I observed that our guide had one on.

So soon as we had finished our meal our venerable conductor, who had been standing all the while, regarding us with inquiring eyes, and our guns with something as like fear as his pride would allow him to show, bowed towards Good, whom he evidently took for the leader of the party on account of the splendour of his apparel, and once more led the way through the door and to the foot of the great staircase. Here we paused for a moment to admire two colossal lions, each hewn from a single block of pure black marble, and standing rampant on the terminations of the wide balustrades of the staircase. These lions are magnificently executed, and it is said were sculptured by Rademas, the great prince who designed the staircase, and who was without doubt, to judge from the many beautiful examples of his art that we saw afterwards, one of the finest sculptors who have ever lived, either in this or any other country. Then we proceeded almost with a feeling of awe up that splendid stair, a work executed for all time and that will, I do not doubt, be admired thousands of years hence by generations unborn unless an earthquake throw it down. Even Umslopogaas, who as a general rule made it a point of honour not to show astonishment, which he considered undignified, was fairly startled out of himself, and asked if the 'bridge had been built by men or devils,' which was his vague way of alluding to any supernatural power. But Alphonse did not care about it. Its solid grandeur jarred upon the frivolous little Frenchman, who said that it was all '*très magnifique, mais triste—ah, triste!*' and went on to suggest that it would be improved if the balustrades were *gilt*.

On we went up the first flight of one hundred and twenty steps, across the broad platform joining it to the second flight, where we paused to admire the glorious view of one of the most beautiful stretches of country that the world can show, edged by the blue waters of the lake. Then we passed on up this till at last we reached the top, where we found a large standing space to which there were three entrances, all of small size. Two of these gave on to rather narrow galleries or roadways cut in the face of the precipice that ran round the palace walls and led to the principal thoroughfares of the city, and were used by the inhabitants passing up and down from the docks. These were defended by gates of bronze, and also, as we afterwards learnt, it was possible to let down a portion

of the roadways themselves by withdrawing certain bolts, and thus render it almost impossible for an enemy to pass. The third entrance consisted of a flight of ten curved black marble steps leading to a doorway cut in the palace wall. This wall was in itself a work of art, being built of huge blocks of granite to the height of forty feet, and so fashioned that its face was concave, whereby it was rendered practically impossible for it to be scaled. To this doorway our guide led us. The door, which was very massive, and made of wood protected by an outer gate of bronze, was closed; but on our approach it was thrown wide, and we were met by the challenge of a sentry, who was armed with a heavy triangular-bladed spear, not unlike a bayonet in shape, and a cutting sword, and protected by breast and back plates of skilfully prepared hippopotamus-hide, and a small round shield fashioned of the same tough material. The sword instantly attracted our attention; it was practically identical with the one in the possession of Mr. Mackenzie which he had obtained from the ill-starred wanderer. There was no mistaking the gold-lined fretwork cut in the thickness of the blade. So the man had told the truth after all. Our guide instantly gave a password, which the soldier acknowledged by letting the iron shaft of his spear fall with a ringing sound upon the pavement, and we passed on through the massive wall into the courtyard of the palace. This was about forty yards square, and laid out in flower-beds full of lovely shrubs and plants, many of which were quite new to me. Through the centre of this garden ran a broad walk formed of powdered shells brought from the lake in the place of gravel. Following this we came to another doorway with a round heavy arch, which is hung with thick curtains, for there are no doors in the palace itself. Then came another short passage, and we were in the great hall of the palace, and once more stood astonished at the simple and yet overpowering grandeur of the place.

The hall is, as we afterwards learnt, one hundred and ten feet long by eighty wide, and has a magnificent arched roof of carved wood. Down the entire length of the building there are on either side, and at a distance of twenty feet from the wall, slender shafts of black marble springing sheer to the roof, beautifully fluted, and with carved capitals. At one end of this great place which these pillars supported is the group of which I have already spoken as executed by the King Rademas to commemorate his building of the staircase; and really, when we had time to admire it, its loveliness almost struck us dumb. The group, of which the figures

are in white, and the couch in black marble, is about half as large again as life, and represents a young man of noble countenance and form sleeping heavily upon a couch. One arm is carelessly thrown over the side of this couch, and his head reposes upon the other, its curling locks partially hiding it. Bending over him, her hand resting on his forehead, is a draped female form of such white loveliness as to make the beholder's breath stand still. And as for the calm glory that shines upon her perfect face—well, I can never hope to describe it. But there it rests like the shadow of an angel's smile; and power, love, and divinity all have their part in it. Her eyes are fixed upon the sleeping youth, and perhaps the most extraordinary thing about this beautiful work is the success with which the artist has succeeded in depicting on the sleeper's worn and weary face the sudden rising of a new and spiritual thought as the spell begins to work within his mind. You can see that an inspiration is breaking in upon the darkness of the man's soul as the dawn breaks in upon the darkness of the night. It is a glorious piece of statuary, and none but a genius could have conceived it. Between each of the black marble columns is some such group of figures, some allegorical, and some representing the persons and wives of deceased monarchs or great men; but none of them, in our opinion, comes up to the one I have described, although several are from the hand of the great sculptor and engineer, King Rademas.

In the exact centre of the hall was a solid mass of black marble about the size of a baby's arm-chair, which it rather resembled in appearance. This, as we afterwards learnt, was the sacred stone of this remarkable people, and on it their monarchs laid their hand after the ceremony of coronation, and swore by the sun to safeguard the interests of the empire, and to maintain its customs, traditions, and laws. This stone was evidently exceedingly ancient (as indeed all stones are), and was scored down its sides with long marks or lines, which Sir Henry said proved it to have been a fragment that at some remote period in its history had been ground in the iron jaws of glaciers. There was a curious prophecy about this block of marble, which was reported among the people to have fallen from the sun, to the effect that when it was shattered into fragments a king of alien race should rule over the land. As the stone, however, looked remarkably solid, the native princes seemed to have a fair chance of keeping their own for many a long year.

At the end of the hall is a dais spread with rich carpets, on

which two thrones are set side by side. These thrones are shaped like great chairs, and are made of solid gold. The seats are richly cushioned, but the backs are left bare, and on each is carved the emblem of the sun, shooting out his fiery rays in all directions. The footstools are golden lions couchant, with yellow topazes set in them for eyes. There are no other gems about them.

The place is lighted by numerous but narrow windows, placed high up, cut on the principle of the loopholes to be seen in ancient castles, but innocent of glass, which was evidently unknown here.

Such is a brief description of this splendid hall in which we now found ourselves, compiled of course from our subsequent knowledge of it. On this occasion we had but little time for observation, for when we entered we perceived that a large number of men were gathered together in front of the two thrones, which were unoccupied. The principal among them were seated on carved wooden chairs ranged to the right and the left of the thrones, but not in front of them, and were dressed in white tunics, with various embroideries and different coloured edgings, and armed with the usual pierced and gold-inlaid swords. To judge from the dignity of their appearance, they seemed one and all to be individuals of very great importance. Behind each of these great men was a small knot of followers and attendants.

Seated by themselves, in a little group to the left of the throne, were six men of a different stamp. Instead of wearing the ordinary kilt they were clothed in long robes of pure white linen, with the same symbol of the sun that is to be seen on the back of the chairs, emblazoned in gold thread upon the breast. This garment was girt up at the waist with a simple golden curb-like chain, from which hung long elliptic plates of the same metal, fashioned in shiny scales like those of a fish, that, as their wearers moved, jingled and reflected the light. They were all men of mature age and of a severe and impressive cast of features, which was rendered still more imposing by the long beards they wore.

The personality of one individual among them, however, impressed us at once. He seemed to stand out among his fellows and refuse to be overlooked. He was very old—eighty at least—and extremely tall, with a long snow-white beard that hung nearly to his waist. His features were aquiline and deeply cut, and his eyes were grey and cold-looking. The heads of the others were bare, but this man wore a sort of round cap entirely covered with gold embroidery, from which we judged that he was a person of great

importance; and indeed it afterwards transpired that he was Agon, the High Priest of the country. As we approached, all these men, including the priests, rose and bowed to us with the greatest courtesy, at the same time placing the two fingers across the lips in salutation. Then soft-footed attendants advanced from between the pillars, bearing seats, which were placed in a line in front of the thrones. We three sat down, Alphonse and Umslopogaas standing behind us. Scarcely had we done so when there came a blare of trumpets from some passage to the right, and a similar blare from the left. Next a man with a long white wand of ivory appeared just in front of the right-hand throne, and cried out something in a loud voice, ending with the word *Nyleptha*, repeated three times; and another man, similarly attired, called out a similar sentence before the other throne, but ending with the word *Sorais*, also repeated thrice. Then came the tramp of armed men from each side entrance, and in filed about a score of picked and magnificently accoutred guards, who formed up on each side of the thrones, and let their heavy iron-handled spears fall simultaneously with a clash upon the black marble flooring. Another double blare of trumpets, and in from either side, each attended by six maidens, swept the two Queens of Zu-vendis, everybody in the hall rising to greet them as they came.

I have seen beautiful women in my day, and am no longer thrown into transports at the sight of a pretty face; but language fails me when I try to give some idea of the blaze of loveliness that then broke upon us in the persons of these sister Queens. Both were young—perhaps five-and-twenty years of age—tall and exquisitely formed; but there the likeness stopped. One, *Nyleptha*, was a woman of dazzling fairness; her right arm and breast bare, after the custom of her people, showed like snow even against her white and gold-embroidered 'kaf,' or toga. And as for her sweet face, all I can say is, that it was one that few men could look on and forget. Her hair, a veritable crown of gold, clustered in short ringlets over her shapely head, half hiding the ivory brow, beneath which eyes of deep and glorious grey flashed out in tender majesty. I cannot attempt to describe her other features, only the mouth was most sweet, and curved like Cupid's bow, and over the whole countenance there shone an indescribable look of lovingkindness, lit up by a shadow of delicate humour that lay upon her face like a touch of silver on a rosy cloud.

She wore no jewels, but on her neck, arm, and knee were the usual torques of gold, in this instance fashioned like a snake; and

her dress was of pure white linen of excessive fineness, plentifully embroidered with gold and with the familiar symbols of the sun.

Her twin sister, Sorais, was of a different and darker type of beauty. Her hair was wavy like Nyleptha's but coal-black, and fell in masses on her shoulders; her complexion was olive, her eyes large, dark, and lustrous; the lips were full, and I thought rather cruel. Somehow her face, quiet and even cold as it was, gave an idea of passion in repose, and caused one to wonder involuntarily what its aspect would be if anything occurred to break the calm. It reminded me of the deep sea, that even on the bluest days never loses its visible stamp of power, and in its murmuring sleep is yet instinct with the spirit of the storm. Her figure, like her sister's, was almost perfect in its curves and outlines, but a trifle more rounded, and her dress was absolutely the same.

As this lovely pair swept onwards to their respective thrones, amid the deep attentive silence of the Court, I was bound to confess to myself that they did indeed fulfil my idea of royalty. Royal they were in every way—in form, in grace, and queenly dignity, and in the barbaric splendour of their attendant pomp. But methought that they needed no guards or gold to proclaim their power and bind the loyalty of wayward men. A glance from those bright eyes or a smile from those sweet lips, and while the red blood runs in the veins of youth women such as these will never lack subjects ready to do their biddings to the death.

But after all they were women first and queens afterwards, and therefore not devoid of curiosity. As they passed to their seats I saw both of them glance swiftly in our direction. I saw, too, that their eyes passed by me, seeing nothing to charm them in the person of an insignificant and grizzled old man. Then they looked with evident astonishment on the grim form of old Umslopogaas, who raised his axe in salutation. Attracted next by the splendour of Good's apparel, for a second their glance rested on him like a humming moth upon a flower, then off it darted to where Sir Henry Curtis stood, the sunlight from a window playing upon his yellow hair and peaked beard, and marking out the outlines of his massive frame against the twilight of the somewhat gloomy hall. He raised his eyes, and they met the fair Nyleptha's full, and thus for the first time the goodliest man and woman that it has ever been my lot to see looked one upon another. And why it was I know not, but I saw the swift blood run up beneath Nyleptha's skin as the pink lights run up the morning sky. Red grew her

fair bosom and shapely arm, red the swanlike neck; the rounded cheeks blushed red as the petals of a rose, and then the crimson flood sank back to whence it came and left her pale and trembling.

I glanced at Sir Henry. He, too, had coloured up to the eyes.

'Oh, my word!' thought I to myself, 'the ladies have come on the stage, and now we may look to the plot to develop itself.' And I sighed and shook my head, knowing that the beauty of a woman is like the beauty of the lightning—a destructive thing and a cause of desolation. By the time that I had finished my reflections both the Queens were on the thrones, for all this had happened in about four seconds. Once more the unseen trumpets blared out, and then the Court seated itself, and Queen Sorais motioned to us to do likewise.

Next from among the crowd whither he had withdrawn stepped forward our guide, the old gentleman who had towed us ashore, holding by the hand the girl whom we had seen first and afterwards rescued from the hippopotamus. Having made obeisance he proceeded to address the Queens, evidently describing to them the way and place where we had been found. It was most amusing to watch the astonishment, not unmixed with fear, reflected upon their faces as they listened to his tale. Clearly they could not understand how we had reached the lake, and been found floating on it, and were inclined to attribute our presence to supernatural causes. Then the narrative proceeded, as I judged from the frequent appeals that our guide made to the girl, to the point where we had shot the hippopotami, and we at once perceived that there was something very wrong about those hippopotami, for the history was frequently interrupted by indignant exclamations from the little group of white-robed priests and even from the courtiers, while the two Queens listened with an amazed expression, especially when our guide pointed to the rifles in our hands as being the means of destruction. And here, to make matters clear, I may as well explain at once that the inhabitants of Zu-vendis are sun-worshippers, and that for some reason or other the hippopotamus is a sacred animal among them. Not that they do not kill it, because at certain seasons of the year they slaughter thousands—which are specially preserved in large lakes up the country—and use their hides for armour for soldiers, but this does not prevent them from considering these animals as sacred to the sun. Now, as ill luck would have it, the particular hippopotami we had shot were a family of tame animals that were kept at the mouth of the port and daily fed by priests whose special duty it was

to attend to them. When we shot them I thought that the brutes were suspiciously tame, and this was, as we afterwards ascertained, the cause of it. Thus it came about that in attempting to show off we had committed sacrilege of a most aggravated nature.

When our guide had finished his tale, the old man with the long beard and round cap, whose appearance I have already described, and who was, as I have said, the High Priest of the country, and known by the name of Agon, rose and commenced an impassioned harangue. I did not like the look of his cold grey eye as he fixed it on us. I should have liked it still less had I known that in the name of the outraged majesty of his god he was demanding that the whole lot of us should be offered up as a sacrifice by means of being burnt alive.

After he had finished speaking the Queen Sorais addressed him in a soft and musical voice, and appeared, to judge from his gestures of dissent, to be putting the other side of the question before him. Then Nyleptha spoke in liquid accents. Little did we know that she was pleading for our lives. Finally, she turned and addressed a tall, soldierlike man of middle age with a black beard and a long plain sword, whose name, as we afterwards learnt, was Nasta, and who was the greatest lord in the country; apparently appealing to him for support. Now when Sir Henry had caught her eye and she had blushed so rosy red, I had seen that the incident had not escaped this man's notice, and what is more, that it was eminently disagreeable to him, for he bit his lip and his hand tightened on his sword-hilt. Afterwards we learnt that he was an aspirant for the hand of this Queen in marriage, which accounted for it. This being so, Nyleptha could not have appealed to a worse person, for, speaking in slow, heavy tones, he appeared to confirm all that the High Priest Agon said. As he spoke, Sorais put her elbow on her knee, and, resting her chin on her hand, looked at him with a suppressed smile upon her lips, as though she saw through the man, and was determined to be his match; but Nyleptha grew very angry. Her cheek flushed, her eyes flashed, and she did indeed look lovely. Finally she turned to Agon and seemed to give some sort of qualified assent, for he bowed at her words; and as she spoke she moved her hands as though to emphasise her words; whilst all the time Sorais kept her chin on her hand and smiled. Then suddenly Nyleptha made a sign, and the trumpets blew again, and everybody rose to leave the hall save ourselves and the guards, whom she motioned to stay.

When they were all gone she bent forward and, smiling sweetly, partially by signs and partially by exclamations made it clear to us that she was very anxious to know where we came from. The difficulty was how to explain, but at last an idea struck me. I had my large pocket-book in my pocket and a pencil. Taking it out, I made a little sketch of a lake, and then as best I could drew the underground river and the lake at the other end. When I had done this I advanced to the steps of the throne and gave it to her. She understood it at once and clapped her hands with delight, and then descending from the throne took it to her sister Sorais, who also evidently understood. Next she took the pencil from me, and after examining it with curiosity proceeded to make a series of delightful little sketches, the first representing herself holding out both hands in welcome, and a man uncommonly like Sir Henry taking them. Next she drew a lovely little picture of a hippopotamus rolling about dying in the water, and of an individual, in whom we had no difficulty in recognising Agon the High Priest, holding up his hands in horror on the bank. Then followed a most alarming picture of a dreadful fiery furnace and of the same figure, Agon, poking us into it with a forked stick. This picture perfectly horrified me, but I was a little reassured when she nodded sweetly and proceeded to make a fourth drawing—of a man again uncommonly like Sir Henry, and of two women, in whom I recognised Sorais and herself, each with one arm around him, and holding a sword in protection over him. To all of these Sorais, who I saw was employed in carefully taking us all in—especially Curtis—signified her approval by nodding.

At last Nyleptha drew a final sketch of a rising sun, indicating that she must go, and that we should meet on the following morning; whereat Sir Henry looked so disappointed that she saw it, and, I suppose by way of consolation, extended her hand to him to kiss, which he did with pious fervour. At the same time Sorais, off whom Good had never taken his eyeglass during the whole indaba [interview], rewarded him by giving him her hand to kiss, though, while she did so, her eyes were fixed upon Sir Henry. I am glad to say that I was not implicated in these proceedings; neither of them gave me her hand to kiss.

Then Nyleptha turned and addressed the man who appeared to be in command of the bodyguard, apparently from her manner and his frequent obeisances, giving him very stringent and careful orders; after which, with a somewhat coquettish nod and

smile, she left the hall, followed by Sorais and most of the guards.

When the Queens had gone, the officer whom Nyleptha had addressed came forward and with many tokens of deep respect led us from the hall through various passages to a sumptuous set of apartments opening out of a large central room lighted with brazen swinging lamps (for it was now dusk) and richly carpeted and strewn with couches. On a table in the centre of the room was set a profusion of food and fruit, and, what is more, flowers. There was delicious wine also in ancient-looking sealed earthenware flagons, and beautifully chased golden and ivory cups to drink it from. Servants, male and female, also were there to minister to us, and whilst we ate, from some recess outside the apartment

The silver lute did speak between

The trumpet's lordly blowing ;

and altogether we found ourselves in a sort of earthly paradise which was only disturbed by the vision of that disgusting High Priest who intended to commit us to the flames. But so very weary were we with our labours that we could scarcely keep ourselves awake through the sumptuous meal, and as soon as it was over we indicated that we desired to sleep. So they led us off, and would have given us a room each, but we made it clear that we would sleep two in a room. As a further precaution against surprise we left Umslopogaas with his axe to sleep in the main chamber near the curtained doorways leading to the apartments which we occupied respectively, Good and I in the one, and Sir Henry and Alphonse in the other. Then throwing off our clothes, with the exception of the mail shirts, which we considered it safer to keep on, we flung ourselves down upon the low and luxurious couches, and drew the silk-embroidered coverlids over us.

In two minutes I was just dropping off when I was aroused by Good's voice.

'I say, Quatermain,' he said, 'did you ever see such eyes?'

'Eyes!' I said, crossly; 'what eyes?'

'Why, the Queen's, of course! Sorais, I mean—at least I think that is her name.'

'Oh, I don't know,' I yawned; 'I didn't notice them much; I suppose they are good eyes,' and again I dropped off.

Five minutes or so elapsed, and I was once more awakened.

'I say, Quatermain,' said the voice.

'Well,' I answered testily, 'what is it now?'

'Did ye notice her ankle? The shape——'

This was more than I could stand. By my bed stood the veldtschoons I had been wearing. Moved quite beyond myself I took them up and threw them straight at Good's head—and hit it.

After that I slept the sleep of the just, and a very heavy sleep it must be. As for Good, I don't know if he went to sleep or if he continued to pass Sorais' beauties in mental review, and, what is more, I don't care.

(To be continued.)

Pastoral.

TO leave home in early life is to be stunned and quickened with novelties; but when years have come, it only casts a more endearing light upon the past. As in those composite photographs of Mr. Galton's, the image of each new sitter brings out but the more clearly the central features of the race; when once youth has flown, each new impression only deepens the sense of nationality and the desire of native places. So may some cadet of Royal Écossais or the Albany Regiment, as he mounted guard about French citadels, so may some officer marching his company of the Scots-Dutch among the polders, have felt the soft rains of the Hebrides upon his brow, or started in the ranks at the remembered aroma of peat smoke. And the rivers of home are dear in particular to all men. This is as old as Naaman, who was jealous for Abana and Pharpar; it is confined to no race nor country, for I know one of Scottish blood but a child of Suffolk, whose fancy still lingers about the liliated lowland waters of that shire. But the streams of Scotland are incomparable in themselves—or I am only the more Scottish to suppose so—and their sound and colour dwell for ever in the memory. How often and willingly do I not look again in fancy on Tummel, or Manor, or the talking Airdle, or Dee swirling in its Lynn; on the bright burn of Kinnaird, or the golden burn that pours and sulks in the den behind Kingussie! I think shame to leave out one of these enchantresses, but the list would grow too long if I remembered all; only I may not forget Allan Water, nor birch-wetting Rogie, nor yet Almond; nor, for all its pollutions, that water of Leith of the many and well-named mills—Bell's Mills, and Cannon Mills, and Silver Mills; nor Redford Burn of pleasant memories; nor yet, for all its smallness, that nameless trickle that springs in the green bosom of Allermuir, and is fed from Halkerside with a perennial teacupful, and threads the moss under the Shearer's Knowe, and makes one pool there, overhung by a rock, where I

loved to sit and make bad verses, and is then kidnapped in its infancy by subterranean pipes for the service of the sea-beholding city in the plain. From many points in the moss you may see at one glance its whole course and that of all its tributaries; the geographer of this Lilliput may visit all its corners without sitting down, and not yet begin to be breathed; Shearer's Knowe and Halkerside are but names of adjacent cantons on a single shoulder of a hill, as names are squandered (it would seem to the inexpert, in superfluity) upon these upland sheepwalks; a bucket would receive the whole discharge of the toy river; it would take it an appreciable time to fill your morning bath; for the most part, besides, it soaks unseen through the moss; and yet for the sake of auld lang syne, and the figure of a certain *genius loci*, I am condemned to linger awhile in fancy by its shores; and if the nymph (who cannot be above a span in stature) will but inspire my pen, I would gladly carry the reader along with me.

John Todd, when I knew him, was already 'the oldest herd on the Pentlands,' and had been all his days faithful to that curlew-scattering, sheep-collecting life. He remembered the droving days, when the drove roads, that now lie green and solitary through the heather, were thronged thoroughfares. He had himself often marched flocks into England, sleeping on the hill-sides with his caravan; and by his account it was a rough business not without danger. The drove roads lay apart from habitation; the drovers met in the wilderness, as to-day the deep-sea fishers meet off the banks in the solitude of the Atlantic, and in the one as in the other case rough habits and fist-law were the rule. Crimes were committed, sheep filched, and drovers robbed and beaten; most of which offences had a moorland burial and were never heard of in the courts of justice. John, in those days, was at least once attacked—by two men after his watch—and at least once, betrayed by his habitual anger, fell under the danger of the law and was clapped into some rustic prison-house, the doors of which he burst in the night and was no more heard of in that quarter. When I knew him, his life had fallen in quieter places, and he had no cares beyond the dullness of his dogs and the inroads of pedestrians from town. But for a man of his propensity to wrath, these were enough; he knew neither rest nor peace, except by snatches; in the grey of the summer morning, and already from far up the hill, he would wake the 'toun' with the sound of his shoutings; and in the lambing time, his cries were not yet silenced late at night. This wrathful voice of a man

unseen might be said to haunt that quarter of the Pentlands, an audible bogie; and no doubt it added to the fear in which men stood of John a touch of something legendary. For my own part, he was at first my enemy, and I, in my character of a rambling boy, his natural abhorrence. It was long before I saw him near at hand, knowing him only by some sudden blast of bellying from far above, bidding me 'c'way oot amang the sheep.' The quietest recesses of the hill harboured this ogre; I skulked in my favourite wilderness like a Cameronian of the Killing Time, and John Todd was my Claverhouse, and his dogs my questing dragoons. Little by little, we dropped into civilities; his hail at sight of me began to have less of the ring of a war-slogan; soon, we never met but he produced his snuff-box, which was with him, like the red-indian's calumet, a part of the heraldry of peace; and at length, in the ripeness of time, we grew to be a pair of friends, and when I lived alone in these parts in the winter, it was a settled thing for John to 'give me a cry' over the garden wall as he set forth upon his evening round, and for me to overtake and bear him company.

That dread voice of his that shook the hills when he was angry, fell in ordinary talk very pleasantly upon the ear, with a kind of honied, friendly whine, not far off singing, that was eminently Scottish. He laughed not very often, and when he did, with a sudden, loud haw-haw, hearty but somehow joyless, like an echo from a rock. His face was permanently set and coloured; ruddy and stiff with weathering; more like a picture than a face; yet with a certain strain and a threat of latent anger in the expression, like that of a man trained too fine and harassed with perpetual vigilance. He spoke in the richest dialect of Scotch I ever heard; the words in themselves were a pleasure and often a surprise to me, so that I often came back from one of our patrols with new acquisitions; and this vocabulary he would handle like a master, stalking a little before me, 'beard on shoulder,' the plaid hanging loosely about him, the yellow staff clapped under his arm, and guiding me uphill by that devious, tactical ascent which seems peculiar to men of his trade. I might count him with the best talkers; only that talking Scots and talking English seem incomparable acts. He touched on nothing at least, but he adorned it; when he narrated, the scene was before you; when he spoke (as he did mostly) of his own antique business, the thing took on a colour of romance and curiosity that was surprising. The clans of sheep with their particular territories

on the hill, and how, in the yearly killings and purchases, each must be proportionally thinned and strengthened; the midnight busyness of animals, the signs of the weather, the cares of the snowy season, the exquisite stupidity of sheep, the exquisite cunning of dogs: all these he could present so humanly, and with so much old experience and living gusto, that weariness was excluded. And in the midst, he would suddenly straighten his bowed back, the stick would fly abroad in demonstration, and the sharp thunder of his voice roll out a long itinerary for the dogs, so that you saw at last the use of that great wealth of names for every knowe and howe upon the hillside; and the dogs, having hearkened with lowered tails and raised faces, would run up their flags again to the masthead and spread themselves upon the indicated circuit. It used to fill me with wonder how they could follow and retain so long a story; but John denied these creatures all intelligence; they were the constant butt of his passion and contempt; it was just possible to work with the like of them, he said; not more than possible. And then he would expand upon the subject of the really good dogs that he had known and the one really good dog that he had himself possessed. He had been offered forty pounds for it; but a good collie was worth more than that, more than anything, to a 'herd'; he did the herd's work for him. 'As for the like of them!' he would cry, and scornfully indicate the scouring tails of his assistants.

Once—I translate John's Lallan, for I cannot do it justice, being born '*Britannis in montibus*,' indeed, but alas! '*inerudito sæculo*'—once, in the days of his good dog, he had bought some sheep in Edinburgh, and on the way out, the road being crowded, two were lost. This was a reproach to John and a slur upon the dog; and both were alive to their misfortune. Word came, after some days, that a farmer about Braid had found a pair of sheep; and thither went John and the dog to ask for restitution. But the farmer was a hard man and stood upon his rights. 'How were they marked?' he asked; and since John had bought right and left from many sellers and had no notion of the marks—'Very well,' said the farmer, 'then it's only right that I should keep them.' 'Well,' said John, 'it's a fact that I cannae tell the sheep; but if my dog can, will ye let me have them?' The farmer was honest as well as hard, and besides I dare say he had little fear of the ordeal; so he had all the sheep upon his farm into one large park, and turned John's dog into

their midst. That hairy man of business knew his errand well; he knew that John and he had bought two sheep and (to their shame) lost them about Boroughmuirhead; he knew besides (the Lord knows how, unless by listening) that they were come to Braid for their recovery; and without pause or blunder, singled out, first one and then another, the two waifs. It was that afternoon the forty pounds were offered and refused; and the shepherd and his dog—what do I say? the true shepherd and his man—set off together by Fairmilehead in jocund humour, and ‘smiled to ither’ all the way home, with the two recovered ones before them. So far, so good; but intelligence may be abused; the dog, as he is by little man’s inferior in mind, is only by little his superior in virtue; and John had another collie tale of quite a different complexion. At the foot of the moss behind Kirk Yetton (Caer Ketton, wise men say) there is a scrog of low wood and a pool with a dam for washing sheep. John was one day lying under a bush in the scrog, when he was aware of a collie on the far hillside, skulking down through the deepest of the heather with obtrusive stealth. He knew the dog; knew him for a clever, rising practitioner from quite a distant farm; one whom perhaps he had coveted as he saw him masterfully steering flocks to market. But what did the practitioner so far from home? and why this guilty and secret manœuvring towards the pool?—for it was towards the pool that he was heading. John lay the closer under his bush; and presently saw the dog come forth upon the margin, look all about to see if he were anywhere observed, plunge in and repeatedly wash himself over head and ears, and then (but now openly and with tail in air) strike homeward over the hills. That same night, word was sent his master, and the rising practitioner, shaken up from where he lay, all innocence, before the fire, was had out to a dykeside and promptly shot; for alas! he was that foulest of criminals under trust, a sheep-eater; and it was from the maculation of sheep’s blood that he had come so far to cleanse himself in the pool behind Kirk Yetton.

A trade that touches nature, one that lies at the foundations of life, in which we have all had ancestors employed, so that on a hint of it ancestral memories revive, lends itself to literary use, vocal or written. The fortune of a tale lies not alone in the skill of him that writes, but as much, perhaps, in the inherited experience of him who reads; and when I hear with a particular thrill of things that I have never done or seen, it is one of that innumerable army of my ancestors rejoicing in past deeds. Thus

novels begin to touch not the fine *dilettanti* but the gross mass of mankind, when they leave off to speak of parlours and shades of manner and still-born niceties of motive, and begin to deal with fighting, sailing, adventure, death or childbirth; and thus ancient outdoor crafts and occupations, whether Mr. Hardy wields the shepherd's crook or Count Tolstoi swings the scythe, lift romance into a near neighbourhood with epic. These aged things have on them the dew of man's morning; they lie near, not so much to us, the semi-artificial flowerets, as to the trunk and aboriginal taproot of the race. A thousand interests spring up in the process of the ages, and a thousand perish; that is now an eccentricity or a lost art, which was once the fashion of an empire; and those only are perennial matters that rouse us to-day, and that roused men in all epochs of the past. There is a certain critic, not indeed of execution but of matter, whom I dare be known to set before the best: a certain low-browed, hairy gentleman, at first a percher in the fork of trees, next (as they relate) a dweller in caves, and whom I think I see squatting in cave-mouths, of a pleasant afternoon, to munch his berries—his wife, that accomplished lady, squatting by his side: his name I never heard, but he is often described as Probably Arboreal, which may serve for recognition. Each has his own tree of ancestors, but at the top of all sits Probably Arboreal; in all our veins there run some minims of his old, wild, tree-top blood; our civilised nerves still tingle with his rude terrors and pleasures; and to that which would have moved our common ancestor, all must obediently thrill.

We have not so far to climb to come to shepherds; and it may be I had one for an ascendant who has largely moulded me. But yet I think I owe my taste for that hillside business rather to the art and interest of John Todd. He it was that made it live for me, as the artist can make all things live. It was through him the simple strategy of massing sheep upon a snowy evening, with its attendant scampering of earnest, shaggy aides-de-camp, was an affair that I never wearied of seeing, and that I never weary of recalling to mind: the shadow of the night darkening on the hills, inscrutable black blots of snow shower moving here and there like night already come, huddles of yellow sheep and dartings of black dogs upon the snow, a bitter air that took you by the throat, unearthly harpings of the wind along the moors; and for centre piece to all these features and influences, John winding up the brae, keeping his captain's eye upon all sides and breaking,

ever and again, into a spasm of bellowing that seemed to make the evening bleaker. It is thus that I still see him in my mind's eye, perched on a hump of the declivity not far from Halkerside, his staff in airy flourish, his great voice taking hold upon the hills and echoing terror to the lowlands; I, meanwhile, standing somewhat back, until the fit should be over, and, with a pinch of snuff, my friend relapse into his easy, even conversation.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

The Ballad of Ferencz Renyi.

HUNGARY, 1848.

THIS is the story of Renyi,
And when you have heard it through,
Pray God He send no trial like his
To try the faith of you !

And if his doom be upon you,
Then may God grant you this :
To fight as good a fight as he,
And win a crown like his !

He was strong and handsome and happy,
Beloved and loving and young,
With eyes that men set their trust in,
And the fire of his soul on his tongue.

He loved the Spirit of Freedom
He hated his country's wrongs,
He told the patriots' stories,
And he sang the patriots' songs.

With mother and sister and sweetheart
His safe glad days went by,
Till Hungary called on her children
To arm, to fight, and to die.

' Good-bye to mother and sister ;
Good-bye to my sweet sweetheart ;
I fight for you—you pray for me,
We shall not be apart ! '

The women prayed at the sunrise,
They prayed when the skies grew dim ;
His mother and sister prayed for the Cause,
His sweetheart prayed for him.

For mother and sister and sweetheart,
But most for the true and the right,
He low laid down his own life's hopes
And led his men to fight.

Skirmishing, scouting, and spying,
Night-watch, attack, and defeat ;
The resolute, desperate fighting,
The hopeless, reluctant retreat ;

Ruin, defeat, and disaster,
Capture and loss and despair,
And half of his regiment hidden,
And only this man knew where !

Prisoner, fast bound, sore wounded,
They brought him roughly along,
With his body as weak and broken
As his spirit was steadfast and strong.

Before the Austrian general—
'Where are your men ?' he heard ;
He looked black death in its ugly face
And answered never a word.

'Where is your regiment hidden ?
Speak—you are pardoned straight—
No ? We can find dumb dogs their tongues,
You rebel reprobate !'

They dragged his mother and sister
Into the open hall.
'Give up your men, if these women
Are dear to your heart at all !'

He turned his eyes on his sister,
And spoke to her silently ;
She answered his silence with speaking,
And straight from the heart spoke she.

'If you betray your country
You spit on our father's name :
And what is life without honour ?
And what is death without shame ?'

He looked on the mother who bore him,
And her smile was splendid to see ;
He hid his face with a bitter cry,
But never a word said he.

‘Son of my body—be silent !
My days at the best are few,
And I shall know how to give them,
Son of my heart, for you !’

He shivered, set teeth, kept silence :
With never a plaint or cry
The women were slain before him,
And he stood and saw them die.

Then they brought his lovely beloved,
Desire of his heart and eyes.
‘Say where your men are hidden,
Or say that your sweetheart dies.’

She threw her arms about him,
She laid her lips to his cheek :
‘Speak ! for my sake who love you !
Love, for our love’s sake, speak !’

His eyes are burning and shining
With the fire of immortal disgrace—
God—walk with him in the furnace
And strengthen his soul for a space !

Long he looked at his sweetheart,
His eyes grew tender and wet ;
Closely he held her to him,
His lips to her lips were set.

‘See ! I am young ! I love you !
I am not ready to die !
One word makes us happy for ever,
Together you and I.’

Her hands round his neck were clinging,
Her lips his cold lips caressed ;
He suddenly flung her from him,
And folded his arms on his breast.

She wept, she shrieked, she struggled,
She cursed him in God's name,
For the woe of her early dying,
And for her dying's shame.

And still she stood, and his silence
Like fire was burning him through,
Then the muskets spoke once, and were silent,
And she was silent too.

They turned to torture him further,
If further might be—in vain;
He had held his peace in that threefold hell,
And he never spoke again:

The end of the uttermost anguish
A human soul could bear,
Was the madhouse where tyrants bury
The broken shells of despair.

By the heaven renounced at her altar,
By the hell thrice braved for her sake,
By the years of madness and silence,
By the heart that her enemies brake.

By the young life's promise ruined,
By the years of too living death,
By the passionate self-devotion,
And the absolute perfect faith.

By the thousands who know such anguish,
And share such divine renown,
Who have borne them bravely in battle,
And won the conqueror's crown.

By the torments her children have suffered,
By the blood that her martyrs will give,
By the deaths men have died in her service,
By these shall our Liberty live!

By the silence of tears, in the burden
Of the wrongs we some day will repay,
Live the brothers who died in all ages
For the Freedom we live for to-day!

E. NESBIT.

London Fogs.

IT has been remarked that if it were not for the fogs, life in London would be more enjoyable than in any other capital. Not only do fogs seriously interfere with business and pleasure in every way, but their influence on health is such that after four or five days of their persistence, coupled with severe frost, the mortality of the metropolis is occasionally more than doubled. The frost alone has some effect, but it is the fog which is most deadly.

To take an instance. Dense fog was felt in London at the end of January 1880, and the Registrar-General, in his report for the week ending February 7 of that year, says :—

‘The annual death rate from all causes, which had been equal to 22·6, 27·1, and 31·3 in the three preceding weeks, further rose last week to 48·1 per thousand. The death rate last week was higher than it has been in any week since the cholera epidemics of 1849, 1854, and 1866.

‘The nearest approach in recent years to so high a rate of mortality as that which prevailed in London last week was recorded in the week ending December 20, 1873, when the death rate was equal to 37·5 per thousand, influenced then, as it was last week, by low temperature and dense fogs.

‘The deaths referred to diseases of the respiratory organs, which had been 559 and 757 in the two preceding weeks, further rose to 1,557 last week, and exceeded the corrected weekly average by no less than 1,118. This remarkable fatality of lung diseases was probably due to the combined effect of the cold and fog.’

On a later occasion, in the report for the week ending February 11, 1882, when mortality from all causes was 35·3 per thousand, the Registrar-General remarks :—

‘No age escapes the noxious influence of these fogs, the mortality having risen on each of these three occasions (December 20, 1873, February 7, 1880, and February 11, 1882) at every

period of life; but the effect is most marked on persons of advanced life, and least so on children under five years of age.'

A clear statement of the influence of fog on mortality is contained in one of the lectures delivered at the conferences in connection with the Health Exhibition of 1884 by Dr. J. W. Tripe, a well-known authority on the subject:—

'Diseases of the lungs, excluding consumption, are fatal in proportion to the lowness of the temperature, and the presence of excess of moisture and fog. Thus, in January 1882, the mean weekly temperature fell from $43\cdot9^{\circ}$ in the second week to $36\cdot2^{\circ}$ in the third, with fog and mist. The number of deaths registered during the third week, which may be taken as corresponding with the meteorological conditions of the second week, was 1,700, and in the next week 1,971. Unusual cold, with frequent fogs and little sunshine, continued for four weeks, the weekly number of deaths rising from 1,700 to 1,971, 2,023, 2,632, and 2,188. The deaths from acute diseases of the lungs in these weeks were respectively 279, 481, 566, 881, and 689, showing that a large proportion of the excessive mortality was caused by these diseases. At the end of November and in December of the same year there was a rapid fall of temperature, when the number of deaths from acute diseases of the lungs rose from 297 to 358, 350, 387, 541, 553, and 389 in the respective weeks. From November 29 to December 9 the sun was seen on two days only for four and a half hours, and from December 9th to the 18th, also on two other days for less than four hours, making the total amount of sunshine $8\cdot5$ hours only in twenty days. In January and February the excess of weekly mortality from all diseases reached the large number of 504 deaths; in December it was less, the fogs not having been so dense, but the excess equalled 246 deaths per week. In January 1881, there was much greater and long-continued cold, but the mortality was smaller, as there was less fog, and the oscillations of temperature were not so large.'

Our readers will, therefore, probably admit that it is worth while placing on record what is known about fogs; what are the conditions which give rise to them, and what are the prospects, if any, of obtaining relief from them.

As regards the nature of fogs, the first step in the conversion of aqueous vapour into rain is the production of extremely small droplets, the form in which water is present in fog or cloud, or in the steam-cloud from a locomotive.

We know that aqueous vapour is as perfectly transparent as

air or water. It is only when the moisture is disseminated through the air, not as vapour, but as liquid in a state of minute subdivision, that the mixture becomes opaque, just as a transparent sheet of glass, when pounded up, becomes an opaque white powder, owing to the intermixture of particles of air and glass, with their very different refracting powers.

Fogs are frequently caused by the intermixture of masses of air of very different temperatures. If the mixture of two masses of air has a temperature lower than is requisite to maintain, in the state of vapour, the total quantity of moisture contained in the aggregate volume of air, a portion is, so to speak, precipitated, in the form of minute drops of water, as already explained.

Fogs are, however, generated by the cooling of masses of air in other ways than by mixture. If a warm damp current of air flows over a chilled surface, such as that of an ice-floe, or a cold ocean current, a fog is the result, and the density of the fogs on the Banks of Newfoundland is well known. There they are often as sharply defined in outline as the hardest-looking woolpack clouds. It is not an uncommon phenomenon, when a fog-bank is lying off the harbour of St. John's, for the bowsprit of a ship to be seen emerging from the fog, while not a trace of the masts or hull is perceptible, and again at times the topmasts will be in bright sunshine while the crew cannot see from stem to stern on deck. In a similar way, cold rivers, such as those which flow down from glaciers and pass through the warmer air lying over the open country, produce dense fogs.

A converse cause of the production of fogs is the sudden chilling of saturated air lying over a warm water surface. This is the origin of the fogs which form over running streams in this country in time of frost: the water, being warmer than the air, gives off vapour in greater quantity than the air at its low temperature can contain, and the surplus amount is precipitated as fog.

A class of fogs, termed by Herschel 'radiation fogs,' are formed in valleys or over damp meadows in the evenings. The surface of the ground is cooled by radiation below the dew-point, and the moisture rising from the earth is condensed and forms fog. We often see such fogs over low grassy bottoms, or filling valleys to a certain height, with a surface as level as a lake.

These fogs are produced by moisture rising into cold air, and they disappear after sunrise, as soon as the heat is sufficient to enable the air to take up all the moisture which is present.

As regards the condensation of fog on dust-particles, Mr.

John Aitken has at various times laid before the Royal Society of Edinburgh the results of certain investigations, in which he arrives at the following conclusions :—

‘Vapour must have some solid or liquid body on which to condense, and the dust-particles form the nuclei required. When there is much dust in the air, but little vapour condenses on each particle, and they become but little heavier and easily float in the air. If there are few dust-specks, each gets more vapour, is heavier, and falls more quickly. If there were no dust in the air, there would be no mists or clouds, and the supersaturated air would condense on objects on the earth’s surface. The active nuclei of fog and cloud particles are not the motes seen in a sunbeam, but those which are smaller and invisible. The large motes may be active nuclei, but their number is too small to have any important effect.

‘The products of combustion of gas and fires have great fog-producing power. Smoke descends during a fog because the smoke-particles are good radiators and soon get cooled, and form nuclei on which the water-vapour condenses. Falling smoke indicates a saturated condition of the air, and consequent probability of rain.’

This mention of falling smoke brings us to one of the most unpleasant features of London fogs. Not only is soot deposited copiously on all objects exposed to them, but occasionally one gets a whiff of air which is all but irrespirable, from the presence in it of sulphurous acid and other products of combustion of impure coal.

The fact of the impurity of fog air has been clearly demonstrated by a series of experiments carried on for the Meteorological Council, in the laboratory of St. Bartholomew’s Hospital, by Dr. W. J. Russell. We take from the Report of the Meteorological Office for 1883 the following summary of the results :—

‘The determinations are divided into two series ; one gives the amount of carbonic acid taken at regular intervals, irrespective of weather, and the other gives the amount when fog or mist is present. The average amount present in the air of the City is slightly below four parts in 10,000 of air, and this is shown to be rather less than that which has been found in the air of the few other towns which have been examined. Taking the most recent experiments on the composition of purely country air as indicating that the amount of carbonic acid is as low as three parts in 10,000, even then it seems that in the heart

of London the average increase is not considerable. Further, the individual analyses show that the amount of carbonic acid is often considerably below this average, usually during bright sunny days. The smallest amount of this gas found was 3·3 parts in 10,000 of air, and this was on the Bank Holiday in August 1883.

‘The second series of determinations relate to the amount of carbonic acid present during a fog, and show how much this gas increases under such circumstances. The average of these experiments is 7·2. The largest amount found was 14·1, and this was during a long-continued fog in December 1882. The gradual increase of the gas on this occasion is traced.’

Another series of experiments was carried on by the same gentleman to determine the amounts of organic matter, and of sulphuric acid, present in the atmosphere under different conditions of weather. The organic matter was ascertained by determining the amounts of carbon and nitrogen respectively in grams per 1,000 cubic feet of air. The figures were as follows:—

	Carbon.	Nitrogen.	Sulphuric acid.
Fair weather . .	·0033	·0002	·0128
Dull weather . .	·0101	·0002	·0319
Foggy weather . .	·0239	·0005	·0420

This shows that there is a close relationship between the weather and the amount of impurity present in the air.

One special characteristic of foggy air is its persistence. If fog is admitted into a room by an open window, though the temperature of the room is probably above 60°, while that of the external atmosphere is close to, or even below, the freezing-point, the fog does not immediately disappear, it is not at once evaporated, though it is mixed with air at a temperature some thirty degrees higher than its own. It is a matter of every-day observation that the steam from a locomotive is not so persistent, but speedily evaporates into the surrounding air.

It is a well-known fact that in several balloon ascents in clouds and in fogs the air has been found to be far from being saturated with moisture; in fact, to be comparatively dry. This apparent paradox has been explained by Professor E. Frankland, who has shown that in certain manufactures the evaporation of a liquid is materially retarded by covering its surface with a film of coal-tar; and so, ‘from our manufactories and domestic fires, vast aggregate quantities of coal-tar and paraffin are daily distilled

into the atmosphere, and, condensing upon or attaching themselves to the watery spherules of fog or cloud, must of necessity coat these latter with an oily film, which would in all probability retard the evaporation of the water, and the consequent saturation of the interstitial air.' Accordingly, the fog-spherules continue to float about in the comparatively heated air of a dwelling-house, while the steam from a boiling tea-kettle at once disappears.

Let us now consider what is known about the conditions under which fog arises. The production of sea-fogs, such as those of Newfoundland, has been already alluded to. The inland fogs of London are due to different causes. They are almost always associated with what are called anticyclonic conditions of weather. Weather is said to be anticyclonic over any district when the barometer is higher over that district than over the adjacent country. When this is the case, it is found that there is always a calm at the centre of the anticyclone, and in winter the weather is very cold. Under these circumstances the vapour rising from damp earth, and especially from water surfaces, like rivers and pools, is condensed and forms fogs. These in London and other large towns charge themselves with smoke, and give rise to the pea-soup atmosphere we enjoy so frequently.

At such times, when anticyclonic conditions exist, it is well known that the so-called inversion of temperature takes place, and the air above our heads is much warmer than that close to the ground.

In the course of the years 1873-74, a series of experiments was carried on by the staff of the Kew Observatory, on the Pagoda in Kew Gardens, to ascertain what was the influence of height on thermometer readings. The greatest elevation available on the structure was 128 feet 10 inches, and instruments were also placed at levels of 69 feet and 22 feet 6 inches above the ground. In every case, when fog was prevalent, the upper thermometers gave higher readings than the lower ones, the differences, for the difference of level of about 100 feet, from 128 feet 10 inches to 22 feet 6 inches, amounting on three separate occasions of dense fog to 4.8° , 6.0° , and 10.8° respectively.

This great difference of temperature between the upper air and the lower levels of the atmosphere in some measure accounts for the fact that, though fogs are composed of water droplets, they do not, under ordinary circumstances, give rise to rain. The

fog particles as they rise are exposed to higher and higher temperatures, and there is accordingly no tendency to further condensation. In some rare cases a fog is found to be wet; the trees drip with moisture. Under these circumstances it is always found that a thermometer lying on the grass reads higher than one at the height of 4 feet above the ground, so that the ordinary conditions of the 'grass minimum' being below the 'shade minimum' are reversed. In these cases the moisture rising from the ground is chilled as it ascends, and the chilling is carried on to perfect condensation into the form of rain.

Again in the winter of 1881, when the weather was extremely cold, and fogs were very prevalent, some balloon ascents were made near London. On one occasion, the temperature at ground-level being well below the freezing-point, the *aéronauts* were agreeably surprised to find a temperature of 60° when they reached a considerable elevation. On this occasion, as one of them described to the writer, they observed a river of fog lying along the Thames valley as far up as Oxford, while the rising grounds on either side of the river were quite clear.

The fog in this case had no great vertical depth; in fact, this is a well-known circumstance. We find occasionally a fog at the level of the street so dense that we are hardly able to see a few yards ahead, while we can see the sun or even the moon. In such cases high land, such as Hampstead or Highgate, is entirely free from fog.

The greatest darkness does not come from fog which is very dense at the ground-level. At times when the darkness is such that reading is impossible, except by artificial light, the gas lamps for the whole length of a street are clearly visible. As an instance of the degree of darkness which can be experienced in London at such a time, the following may be worth placing on record. One morning, at 10 A.M., a friend of the writer's, noticing that the darkness was particularly intense, put out the gas in his study, and then found that he was quite unable to distinguish a sheet of white writing-paper lying on a black table cloth. He repeated the experiment at nine o'clock the same evening; the fog had cleared off, the stars were shining, but there was no moon. The window looked on a garden, so that there was no source of light in the way of gas lamps. It was found that the white paper was distinguishable, so that the darkness at 10 A.M. was greater than in the depth of night.

Having thus described briefly some of the principal fog

phenomena, let us now say a word about its disappearance. There is little to tell on this subject as regards London fogs; their disappearance is caused by some current of air, which disturbs the stagnant fog and dilutes it with the purer atmosphere above until at length translucency is restored. As far as we can see as yet, no premonition of this desirable consummation is discoverable.

In the case of sea fogs, however, there is occasionally a sign given by which their disappearance may be foreseen. The appearance of a whitish rainbow, without any separation of the prismatic colours, on the fog, is such a sign. These fog-bows are sometimes called 'fog-eaters,' a title which sufficiently expresses their character. They arise when the droplets of water which compose the fog are excessively small—too small, in fact, to give rise to a rainbow, and when the fog-bow appears, the sun has already been able to penetrate the fog-atmosphere.

In conclusion, it may be asked, what chance there is of ameliorating our condition as regards fog in London. There is a faint ray of hope. When the Meteorological Council was instituting the experiments at St. Bartholomew's Hospital Laboratory, of which the results have already been stated, they inquired, as a preliminary step, what records of fog prevalence existed. They were fortunate enough to find one large City firm which had for many years past kept a daily record of the weather, as a check on the daily fluctuation in their sales. The experience of this firm was decisive on the point, that after making allowance for improved means of locomotion, and improved lighting of the streets, which would afford facilities for customers to visit their establishment, the fogs in the City were neither so dense nor so frequent as they were thirty or forty years ago.

This result must be in great measure due to the consumption of smoke, but we are still very far from the condition as regards smoke to which we may reasonably hope to attain. It is to this smoke that we mainly owe the density and general obnoxiousness of our fogs, and as long as we allow it to escape from our chimneys, so long must we put up with all the annoyance fogs entail.

R. H. SCOTT.

Clever Lady Sophia.

ABOUT three o'clock in the morning two ladies, muffled in wraps, were crossing the vestibule of a large London house, in which, as all the distracted neighbourhood knew, a ball was taking place. The elder was a somewhat insignificant-looking old woman, whose figure had lost all symmetry of outline, who was not too well dressed, and whose round face any stranger might have gazed upon without suspecting for a moment that it had once been the means of breaking the hearts of half the young men in London. That is very ancient history, remembered only by a few grey-haired old fogeys, who snigger when they think of it. Lady Sophia Wylie has broken no hearts for the last twenty or thirty years; or, if she has broken any, it has not been by her personal charms that she has effected such disasters. Her daughter, who walked behind her, was tall, slim, graceful, and so pretty as almost to deserve the epithet of beautiful. Indeed, she was frequently so described, although her celebrity may have been in some degree diminished by the fact that she was the youngest and last unmarried member of a family whose good looks had made them famous all over England. She held herself erect and carried her head high, as all her sisters do; she had the golden hair of a slightly reddish tinge, the blue eyes, the short upper lip, and the waxy complexion that they all have. Her features were, perhaps, not quite so regular as the Duchess of Grimsby's and Lady Southsea's, because a family type is apt to lose distinctness of outline by repetition; but some people thought that she had more expression than they.

Her expression at that particular moment was one of utter weariness. She had been taken to three balls that night; for weeks previous she had been going through the hard labour of a London season, and probably had not derived as much enjoyment from it as it is supposed to afford to *débutantes* in general. She looked sleepy and cross; and there is every reason to believe that her countenance faithfully reflected her sensations.

A young man who had been waiting about in the hall advanced, with a certain perceptible diffidence, as the ladies emerged from the cloak-room. He was a handsome young man, dark-haired, broad-shouldered, apparently well-bred; but he lacked that air of assurance which belongs to peers of the realm, elder sons, bankers, brewers, and other distinguished persons. To the least experienced eyes it would have been obvious that he was not an eligible young man. Neither of the ladies took any notice of him, although he followed them closely down the steps and along the strip of red carpet which crossed the pavement beneath the awning; but when the elder lady dropped her fan, he darted forward with great agility, picked it up, and handed it to her. 'Your fan, Lady Sophia,' said he.

Lady Sophia glanced over her shoulder and grabbed her property. 'Oh!' she returned. And without vouchsafing him any further acknowledgment of his civility, she plunged, head first, into her carriage.

But the younger lady paused a moment, extending her hand to the handsome youth. Her face lighted up very prettily, as she said in a voice so gentle as to be almost a whisper, 'Good night.' Then she followed her mother; the carriage-door was shut with a slam, and away they went. What was it that those blue eyes of hers had expressed? Only compassion, perhaps; and yet a confident young man might have fancied that there was a suggestion of regret in them too. Our young man was not confident. He stood staring after Lady Sophia's hired landau until it vanished round the corner, then sighed profoundly, and went back into the house with slow, heavy steps.

Now, supposing that, among the little knot of spectators congregated round the awning, there had been an individual of a slightly imaginative turn, one may guess that out of the scene above described he might easily have constructed a story—a story so common, so commonplace, that it is being repeated every day and every night, not in London only, but in every large city in the world; not in one rank of society, but in all. A careful mother, a portionless daughter, a young man of insufficient income—here are the materials for that romance which nature and circumstances are for ever creating, and for the usual melancholy result of which nobody seems to be justly open to blame. Really it cannot be helped. Young men of insufficient income ought to fall in love with heiresses; portionless young ladies ought not to encourage young men of insufficient income; and it is the

bounden duty of a careful mother to caution her daughter against reckless imprudence. The supposititious spectator might have divined without much difficulty what sort of conversation was going on inside the landau alluded to; and indeed his conjectures would not have been far wrong.

‘Constance,’ says Lady Sophia, ‘I can’t have you so much with that young Warrender. He is not at all desirable.’

‘I am sorry you don’t like him,’ observes the young lady, talking through a yawn; ‘he dances very well.’

‘If he danced like the daughter of Herodias, it would make no difference. The man is a pauper!’

‘He can’t help that,’ remarks Miss Wylie.

‘I don’t know, I’m sure; and, for that matter, I don’t care. And really, Constance, you must get out of the habit of contradicting every word that I say. When I tell you that Mr. Warrender is not desirable, that should be enough.’

However, she did not seem to think that it was enough, for she went on scolding her daughter without intermission during the three or four minutes which the remainder of the drive occupied. Lady Sophia knew how to scold. It was by no means the only thing that she knew, although, perhaps, it was the only thing that she knew thoroughly. Her friends and her enemies were agreed in speaking of her as a very clever woman, meaning probably that she had been a very successful one. She would have been less successful, it may be surmised, if she had had a softer heart and a gentler tongue. She was thought to have displayed great talent in capturing the Duke of Grimsby and Lord Southsea; but, as a matter of fact, these captures had demanded no talent at all. Both of the noblemen in question were rich men; they neither asked nor expected anything better than to obtain wives who were beautiful, amiable, and as well-born as they; the difficulty was to get beautiful, amiable, and well-born girls to accept such husbands—for the Duke of Grimsby was old and ugly, and Lord Southsea’s intemperate habits were notorious. ‘Sophia,’ said a certain elderly and cynical relative of hers, ‘never has had and never will have any trouble with her children. She has made home so infernally unpleasant for them that they would cheerfully marry a negro with a hump upon his back to escape from it.’ One’s relations are not, as a rule, prone to taking too lenient a view of one’s character, and perhaps this was a little hard upon Lady Sophia. Certain, however, it is that her daughters had never disobeyed her, though they had wrangled

a good deal with her before submitting to her behests. At the bottom of her heart she was rather afraid of Constance, who, unlike the others, did not wrangle, and who was accustomed to listen to her lectures in unbroken and disconcerting silence.

Constance, after remarking that Mr. Warrender danced well and could not justly be blamed for being a pauper, said nothing more on his behalf; and the consequence was that Lady Sophia's denunciations of him fell a little flat. Except defending a man whom nobody attacks, there is nothing more ridiculous than to attack a man whom nobody defends.

Now it so chanced that, while Lady Sophia and her daughter were discussing Mr. Warrender, that gentleman was discussing them. From the ball he went to his club, where he met his elder brother, to whom he sometimes confided his troubles, and who, being in the main a very good-natured elder brother, had more than once helped him out of those pecuniary difficulties into which younger brothers are apt to fall. Into his patient ears he now poured the whole history of his hopeless attachment to the beautiful Miss Wylie. Of course, he said, it was a bad job. He couldn't feel a bit sure—though he had sometimes hoped—that the girl herself cared a little for him; but what was absolutely certain was that that old wretch of a mother of hers would be dead against him. Upon the whole, perhaps, he had better go and hang himself. Candidly now, what did his brother think?

Lord Warrender, a somewhat heavy young man of sporting proclivities, who did not go much into society, said he really didn't know. Shouldn't hang himself, anyhow. Thought that, by all accounts, Lady Sophia would be a confoundedly unpleasant mother-in-law, and doubted whether she would consent to be mother-in-law to anyone under an earl. Couldn't Claud manage to fall in love with somebody else? On being emphatically assured that Claud could not by the wildest possibility ever love any woman save Constance Wylie, he scratched his head and made a grimace. No doubt Claud's allowance might be increased, and possibly that was what Claud was thinking; but the question was whether the old harridan (it was thus that Lord Warrender stigmatised poor Lady Sophia in his own mind) would be satisfied with anything moderate in the shape of an allowance; and another question was whether the game was worth the candle. One may not be a particularly brilliant specimen of the hereditary legislator; but for all that, one is not, perhaps, quite such a fool

as one looks. Therefore Lord Warrender committed himself to no rash promises; but presently he said:

‘I’ll tell you what; I wish you’d introduce me to these ladies. I might take soundings, don’t you know—find out whether there’s any chance for you, and—and that.’

Claud jumped at the suggestion. After all, he was heir-presumptive to his brother, who was as rich as Cræsus, and whose dislike for female society was well known. ‘I should like nothing better,’ he declared. ‘Are you going to Lady Polkingham’s to-morrow night?’

‘Well, I wasn’t,’ answered Lord Warrender, ‘but I can. I believe she sent me a card.’

‘That’s all right, then,’ said Claud. ‘Lady Sophia will be delighted to know you, and you might talk to her about me, and make the best of me, you know. Irreproachable moral character—considerable talents—likely to be in Parliament before long, and sure to get on—all that sort of thing. And then you could mention that I’m bound to come into a little money when old Granny dies, which is true, I suppose. She’ll leave me something—a thousand pounds, most likely; but you needn’t enter into particulars.’

‘I’ll do what I can,’ Lord Warrender promised. ‘All the same, if you’ll be advised by me, you’ll give the thing up, and go in for some other girl. There are such lots of them about.’

‘Wait till you’re madly in love with one of them,’ returned his brother, ‘and then come and tell me what you think of the others.’

‘I don’t think I’m over and above likely to fall in love with any of ’em,’ Lord Warrender said placidly. ‘Heaven preserve us from London girls!’

Wholesale condemnations of any class are usually traceable to insufficient acquaintance with that class. Lord Warrender did not know much of what he called ‘London girls’ (by which he probably meant girls who had passed through a London season), and within twenty-four hours he was compelled to make a mental recantation so far, at least, as one individual was concerned.

Great was the surprise, and great also the satisfaction, of Lady Sophia when, on the ensuing evening, the ineligible young man with whom she was acquainted led up to her the highly eligible young man with whom she was not. She was almost civil to the former for the sake of the latter. ‘The very

husband for Constance!’ was the thought that flashed instantaneously across her mind as Lord Warrender—tall, good-natured, and rather sleepy-looking—came to a standstill before her and bowed. She had thought of several men who would do very well for Constance, but of none so entirely suitable as this. Lord Warrender had not only large estates, but was possessed of house-property in London and coal-mines in the North—a young man whom any mother in England would have rejoiced to press to her heart. Lady Sophia did not do anything so startling as that, but she took great pains to please him; she told him how well she had known his father and mother in years gone by, and reproached him in a friendly way for so seldom showing his face in society.

‘Oh, well,’ he answered, ‘I do go to dinners; balls aren’t much in my line. The fact is I’m a shocking bad dancer.’

‘Like most other people,’ said Lady Sophia. ‘There aren’t half a dozen good dancers in London. I don’t suppose you would disgrace yourself if you had a decent partner. Let me introduce you to my daughter, who really does dance well. You may safely trust yourself to her guidance.’

A few minutes after this Lord Warrender was passing through an agreeable and altogether novel experience: he was waltzing with Miss Wylie, and actually enjoying it. It was the first time in his life that he had enjoyed a waltz, and in the simplicity of his heart he told her so.

‘Perhaps,’ she remarked gravely, ‘you have never before met anybody who could do your step.’

‘Have I got a step?’ he asked. ‘I’m very glad to hear it. I shall know what to say the next time I go bumping round the room, and running into everybody. I can’t be expected to steer people who don’t understand my step, can I?’

‘Of course not,’ said Miss Wylie; ‘but I don’t think dancing is a particularly manly accomplishment, do you? One forgives a man for being a little awkward in a ball-room, if one knows that he can shoot, and ride, and—and fight.’

This view of the whole duty of man was not displeasing to Lord Warrender, who happened to be tolerably proficient in the three particulars specified. However, as he had a mind disposed towards equity, and as he recollected opportunely that he was where he was for the purpose of advancing his brother’s interests, he said, ‘Well, there’s no reason why a man shouldn’t dance, too, you know. Look at my brother Claud, for instance. He’s about

as keen a sportsman as you're likely to meet with, and yet he's one of the shining lights of London ball-rooms, they tell me.'

'Yes,' answered Miss Wylie, rather pensively, 'I should think he would do everything well.'

'Not that he's quite as good a shot as I am,' Lord Warrender felt bound to add, in justice to himself. 'I mean he ain't so certain, you know.'

Miss Wylie had a little laugh at this. 'What a funny thing it is,' she said, 'that you men are always accusing women of being jealous, and that it never occurs to you that you are just as bad as we are! You think yourselves far above any feeling of the kind because you don't envy a man who is better looking or better dressed than you are; but you ride jealous and you shoot jealous.'

'Indeed, we do not!' interrupted Lord Warrender, indignantly. 'Now, upon my word, that's the most unfair thing I ever heard said in my life! Some fellows may behave as you say; but they're quite exceptional, I assure you. Of course I know that I'm a pretty fair shot; and why shouldn't I say so? But I don't deny for a moment that there are two or three men who shoot a great deal better.'

'As many as that?' asked Miss Wylie.

'Yes,' answered Lord Warrender, consideringly, 'I could certainly name three. As for riding, I never pretended that I could ride. I go pretty straight, it's true; but that is because I'm well mounted and don't funk. Now, you may take my word for it, Miss Wylie, that you'll find as little envy or jealousy in the hunting-field as in any assemblage of human beings that you can think of.'

Thus began a conversation which Lord Warrender found extremely interesting, and in the course of which he clean forgot the existence of his younger brother. His companion made herself very agreeable to him; her remarks were shrewd and to the point; she put him at his ease, and he had a pleasing conviction that she liked him. In short, to use his own phrase, they 'got on together like one o'clock.' He never suspected that she had purposely led him on to discourse upon topics in which he might be presumed to be at home; nor did he take any note of the rapid flight of time. While they were talking several young men came up to claim promised dances, and were dismissed with an innocent assurance on Miss Wylie's part that they must have made some mistake. Lord Warrender chuckled at their discomfiture. He

had always been given to understand that it is a lady's prerogative to throw over unwelcome partners, and he would have been a greater stoic than he was if he had not been a little flattered by the implied compliment to himself. At length, however, Miss Wylie requested to be taken back to Lady Sophia, who received the errant couple with her most gracious smile.

'Well, Lord Warrender,' said she, 'has Constance succeeded in making a convert of you? Are you beginning to find out that dancing has some charms, after all?'

"Really, do you know, I think I am," Lord Warrender answered, laughing. 'How many balls are you going to to-morrow night? Anywhere where I should have a chance of meeting you, if I turned up?'

'Sit down, and I'll try to remember,' said Lady Sophia. 'Let me see; to-morrow is Thursday, isn't it?'

She began running over the list of her engagements; and while she was thus occupied Claud Warrender slipped up and led Miss Wylie away. It is not likely that this manoeuvre escaped her ladyship's notice; but her brow remained unclouded. 'Duty first, pleasure afterwards,' she may have thought. It is a great mistake to spur a willing horse, and really dear Constance had behaved admirably that evening. Let her but agree to marry the right man, and she should be free to flirt with the wrong one to any extent in reason.

On the following morning the two brothers met. 'How did you find Lady Sophia?' inquired the younger. 'I needn't ask, though, for I saw her grinning and nodding her head at you like an old marionette. Did you manage to put in a word for me?'

'Well, no,' answered Lord Warrender, penitently, 'I'm afraid I didn't; the fact is she didn't give me much chance. I praised you up to the daughter, though.'

'Oh, that wasn't necessary.'

'It wasn't, eh? All right; I'll run you down the next time I see her. I'll tell you what, Claud, that's the prettiest girl and—the jolliest girl I ever met. I declare I almost wish I was in your shoes!'

'I wish I was in yours,' returned Claud, laughing; 'I shouldn't be much afraid of the old woman, then.'

'Oh, I expect she'll come round all right,' said Lord Warrender, confidently. 'She isn't such a bad sort of an old woman, you know.'

‘H’m! that depends upon who is talking to her,’ remarked Claud. ‘Anyhow, I hope you’ll make her understand that *you* don’t want to marry her daughter.’

‘Dear me!’ said Lord Warrender, looking rather alarmed, ‘I trust she doesn’t require any assurance of that kind.’

He was by way of not being a marrying man. In former years all his friends and relations, beginning with his mother, had urged upon him somewhat too frequently and forcibly that it was the duty of a man in his position to marry. More than one lady, too, had striven hard to marry him; so that he had ended by becoming disgusted with marriage as an institution, and had withdrawn himself almost entirely from the society of ladies. Yet it crossed his mind now that, supposing he ever should take a wife, he would like her to resemble Constance Wylie.

More than once in the course of the week that followed this passing notion of his recurred to him. He met Miss Wylie again and again; he danced with her repeatedly, and found, not only that their steps accorded, but that her tastes and opinions agreed quite curiously with his own. He was conscious of a distinct sensation of displeasure when she said to him one evening, ‘How wise you are to remain single! You are such a thorough bachelor in all your ways that I can’t fancy you domesticated.’

This had hitherto been quite his own opinion; nevertheless, he could not help rejoining, ‘Oh, well, I don’t know about that. I suppose if I met my affinity I could be as domestic as anybody else.’

‘Very likely; but I don’t think you have met your affinity yet, Lord Warrender, and what I admire in you is, that you haven’t allowed yourself to be drawn into matrimony by somebody who isn’t your affinity. Upon second thoughts, though, I don’t know why I should admire you. It is so simple not to propose to a woman whom you don’t care for. That is a man’s privilege, and one wonders that men don’t avail themselves of it more extensively.’

‘I always thought,’ observed Lord Warrender, ‘that it was a woman’s privilege to refuse a man whom she didn’t care for.’

Miss Wylie laughed. ‘Oh, I don’t think you can have believed that,’ she said. ‘Good as you are, and simple as you are, you must be aware that that privilege is reserved for heiresses.’

Well, no doubt he was aware of it; and from this and other similar hints which she dropped, he was shrewd enough to per-

ceive that she was alluding to her own case. Most people, when they utter oracular generalities, do mean to allude to their own case. Yet he could not quite bring himself to say (as possibly she may have wished him to say) that he knew she was attached to his brother, and that he was ready to provide for his brother to such an extent as to bring that young gentleman's marriage with his supposed affinity within the range of conceivable events. For one thing, he did not know positively that Miss Wylie regarded his brother as her affinity; and Claud had told him somewhat arrogantly that his cause required no pleading in that quarter. He avoided mentioning Claud's name to her. He was prepared, when matters should become further advanced—if ever they did become further advanced—to behave loyally and generously; but in the meantime he did not see that he could be of much service.

In short, before a fortnight had elapsed Lord Warrender was over head and ears in love with the beautiful Miss Wylie. For this it must be admitted that he was in no way to blame. A man can't help falling in love; and the simple truth is, that he was unconscious of any such catastrophe having befallen him. All he knew was that he was charmed and happy in Miss Wylie's society, that he looked forward to encountering her at the entertainments which he had taken to frequenting, and that the days on which he failed to meet her were dull and blank days for him. One might say as much as that about one's grandmother, supposing one's grandmother to be a singularly fascinating and sympathetic person.

But it is hardly necessary to add that this innocent and child-like view of the situation was not participated in by those who saw Lord Warrender devoting himself, night after night, to the fair *débutante*; and at length a time came when the opinions of a censorious world were revealed to him with startling abruptness. At a ball, one evening, he was meditatively watching Claud and Miss Wylie waltzing together, and was wishing in a vague way that nature had bestowed upon him as handsome a face as his brother's, when Lady Sophia beckoned to him to approach.

'Lord Warrender,' said she, after moving away her dress, so as to admit of his sitting down beside her, 'I want to have a little talk with you. I have noticed—and I am sure it has been a great pleasure to me—that you and dear Constance have become fast friends. You are always together; you dance continually with her, and I think you admire her very much, don't you?'

'Nobody can admire your daughter more than I do, Lady Sophia,' responded Lord Warrender, with much heartiness; for, oddly enough, he had not the least suspicion of what was coming.

'I am quite convinced of that; and—well, and so are other people. You must not mind my dispensing with ceremony: it is so often the best and kindest thing to do. And I dare say you will understand that, situated as I am, I am obliged sometimes to say things which I should be contented with thinking, if dear Constance's father were still alive. Now, you know, Lord Warrender, you have been dancing a great deal with Constance, and people have begun to talk. In fairness to her I feel that I ought to tell you this.'

'I'm—I'm awfully sorry—I won't do it again,' gasped Lord Warrender, utterly taken aback.

If he had been looking at Lady Sophia, instead of at the floor, he would have seen an ominous change come over her face; but it was in her most dulcet tones that she rejoined: 'Dear Lord Warrender, why should you not do it again? If you feel as I think—as I am sure you do, you have only to say so, and then you will be able to dance with her as much as you like.'

'Good gracious!' ejaculated the astounded individual to whom this direct invitation was addressed. He had heard, in novels and plays, of men being asked their intentions, but had always supposed that, if such unpleasant experiences ever took place in real life, they were confined to lower middle-class society. He was considerably alarmed, but he was also angry; and it was the predominance of the latter emotion that enabled him to reply:

'You are making a great mistake, Lady Sophia. As I told you before, I admire Miss Wylie immensely, and if I were a marrying man—but I am not a marrying man; and, in any case, I couldn't think of offering myself to her; because I suspect—in fact, it's as plain as can be—that she is likely to become engaged to my brother before long.'

Lady Sophia broke into a shrill laugh. 'How ridiculous!' she cried. 'You are far too modest, Lord Warrender; and you may take my word for it that Constance is about as likely to become engaged to your brother as to the man in the moon. No; I don't think you will find your brother a very formidable rival.'

'There is no question of rivalry in the matter,' returned Lord Warrender rather crossly, as he got up. 'We'll say no more about it, if you don't mind.'

'Just as you please,' answered Lady Sophia, with undiminished sweetness; 'only I must remind you once more that I am bound to consider what other people say, and I know that if they see you dancing with Constance as you have done lately, they will say that you are engaged to her. Indeed, that is what I myself shall conclude if you dance with her again.'

Lord Warrender swallowed down an uncivil retort, made a little bow, and walked straight out of the room. 'So there's an end of *that*!' he soliloquised, as he drove away. 'No more dancing for me, thank you! I'm sorry for it—sorry for the poor girl too, to have a mother of that kind. What an unprincipled old creature! I suppose she thought I was such a fool that it didn't matter how openly she played her cards with me.'

Nobody likes to be thought a fool or to be treated as such; and, without entertaining any exalted opinion of his own wisdom, Lord Warrender was a good deal annoyed by Lady Sophia's cool assumption that he was a man whom no skill was required to bring to book. 'You don't quite know me yet, my lady,' thought he to himself, as he told his servant to pack up his things and engage berths on board the steamer which was to sail for Christian-sand on the following day. He had a river in Norway and a small house adjacent thereto, whither he was accustomed to betake himself every year in the month of June, with contemptuous disregard of the London season. This year he had postponed his departure, having found the season not wholly devoid of attractions; but now there was nothing to keep him any longer away from the salmon, and off he went, despatching a few valedictory lines to his brother:—

'Dear Claud,—I'm afraid I can't help you much with Miss Wylie. You were right about Lady Sophia; she is a detestable old hag, and I shouldn't wish to have her for a mother-in-law myself. However, if you can see your way at all, and if it is a question of money, let me know. I'll do what I can for you, within ordinary limits; but I still think you had better try to fall in love with somebody else. I'm off to Norway to fish. Very glad to see you, if you care to come over. Yours affectionately W.'

This rather heartless missive met with no response; nor did any of the other men to whom Lord Warrender had hastily telegraphed an offer of hospitality see fit to avail themselves of it. But that did not distress him particularly; for he was a man to whom sport was all-sufficient. At any rate, he had hitherto found it so; and that he did not find it so now was a circumstance

which gave him matter for grave reflection. To play a gigantic salmon for two hours, to lose him in the very moment of victory, and to feel that so frightful a calamity leaves you perfectly cool, calm, and indifferent, is, as every fisherman will admit, a sign of mental derangement which demands careful looking into. Lord Warrender had not been a week in Norway when he passed through this strange experience; and, as self-deception was not among his capacities, he very soon found out what was wrong with him. There was no doubt about it: he was in love with Constance Wylie, the girl of his brother's heart—the girl who, as he could not but guess, would easily be induced to marry him under pressure of maternal solicitude.

Does such a situation present any real difficulty?—and can there be the shadow of a doubt as to what was Lord Warrender's duty, under the circumstances? Of course, to us dispassionate outsiders there can be none. We should scorn to be accepted for the sake of our rank or our wealth (if we had those advantages); we should consider ourselves bound to give way to our younger brother (if we possessed such an encumbrance), and to remain resolutely in the background, at least until his fate should be decided. Nevertheless, it is probable that, were we to find ourselves in Lord Warrender's position, *advocatus diaboli* would be able to meet us with very plausible representations. There was nothing to prove that Miss Wylie was in love with Claud Warrender; there were excellent reasons for believing that she would be happy as the wife of his elder brother, and some for doubting whether she would be happy as the wife of a man whose character was not remarkable for steadiness or solidity. And then came the final, overwhelming argument: 'I never was really in love before in my life; I never shall love any other woman as I love her. Hang it all! haven't I the right to fight my own battle? And is it my fault if Claud and I don't take the field upon exactly even terms?' Is a day or so more of this argument too much of

But one of the great benefits of a healthy, open-air existence is that it keeps a man sane in body and mind. Lord Warrender fought the devil for three weeks in those Norwegian solitudes, and worsted him. At the end of the struggle he was not certain that he would not be morally justified in giving his brother due notice and then entering into competition with him; but he was quite certain that he could not adopt that course. 'There are some things that a fellow can't do, don't you know?' was his mental summing up of the question.

Having made up his mind, he became easier. He had a lingering hope, to which he was fairly entitled; but he was fully determined to keep his promise to Claud. Should the latter's marriage prove to be contingent upon an increase of income, an increase of income should be forthcoming. More than that he could hardly do or say; and more, it might be assumed, would not be expected of him.

Apparently, not even so much as that was expected of him. He spent the summer and autumn in his usual fashion, shooting grouse in Yorkshire, stalking in Scotland, distinguishing himself among the pheasants in Norfolk, and finally taking up his quarters at Melton and settling down to the serious business of hunting for the winter. During all this time he heard nothing of Lady Sophia and her daughter and only received one communication from his brother, who was a poor correspondent. Claud wrote in November to decline an invitation to join a shooting-party, and merely made a passing allusion to his amatory troubles. All that he said upon this subject was contained in a single brief paragraph at the end of his letter:—'I haven't taken your good advice and transferred my affections, though there isn't the ghost of a hope for me so long as old Lady Sophia lives—and, like Auld Robin Gray's wife, she's "no like to dee." I met them at a country house last week. People tell me that she had set her heart on catching you last season, and was awfully sold when you bolted off to Norway in such a hurry. I dare say you've forgotten all about last season, though.'

Lord Warrender had forgotten nothing. He tossed the letter aside with an impatient exclamation. 'I think Claud ought to do one thing or the other,' he muttered. It would be rather hard if, after all, some third person should step in and quietly bear away the prize.

However, he had resolved in his dogged, phlegmatic way that he would not intervene until he could do so with a clear conscience. So he went on with his hunting, and enjoyed himself after a fashion; and the winter passed away and the spring came, bringing an end of hunting and nothing for an occupationless sportsman to do but to adjourn to the metropolis. Lord Warrender hated London, and it has already been said that he hated balls; yet, in this particular year, he removed himself and his belongings to the family mansion in Portland Place, in a corner of which he dwelt, with a certain alacrity; and the very first invitation to a ball which he received he accepted.

He had a distinct and perfectly legitimate hope in his mind when he did so. Honour did not compel him to avoid all occasions of seeing Miss Wylie; and his fate decreed that before he had been five minutes in the ballroom he should be accosted by Lady Sophia. The frank cordiality of her greeting took him by surprise. He had not expected a very kindly reception at her hands after his behaviour of the preceding season; but it seemed that he had done her an injustice.

'So we meet again at last, Lord Warrender!' she exclaimed, while she held his hand. 'And where have you been hiding yourself all this long time? Come and give me an account of your proceedings.'

Lord Warrender obeyed wonderingly. 'And you?' he asked, when he had concluded a succinct recital—'where have you been, and what have you been doing? And—er—how is Miss Wylie?'

He was unable to put this last question with all the cheerful indifference which he had intended to throw into his voice. It was the only one of the three which Lady Sophia thought it necessary to answer.

'As well as possible, thanks,' she said. 'There she is. Don't you think she looks well?'

Constance floated past them at the moment. She was laughing at something that her partner was saying to her; she was more beautiful than ever, if that could be; she seemed to be in high spirits, and had apparently not a care in the world.

'Yes,' answered Lord Warrender, with a smothered sigh; 'she looks very well.' Lady Sophia's countenance assumed an expression of innocent maternal pride. Her eyes followed her daughter for a few moments, and then she said softly: 'Aren't you going to dance with her to-night? She used to be your instructress last year—do you remember?'

He remembered it very well; and he also remembered what he had been told would be the consequence of his dancing with her again. Did Lady Sophia remember her own words? He was half-inclined to remind her of them, but, after an instant's hesitation, decided that he wouldn't. She seemed disposed to let bygones be bygones, and, for his own part, he had no wish to drag painful reminiscences from the oblivion to which they were best consigned. Besides, he was conscious of a great longing to waltz just once more with Constance. 'It shall only be once,' he said to himself; 'and I won't try to meet her again—at any rate, until

I know for certain whether Claud is really out of the running or not.'

The upshot of this was that, a few minutes later, he was careering round the room in the headlong fashion which he so greatly enjoyed, and to which the lady who had the honour of being his unique partner contrived to accommodate herself with as much skill as of yore. Her manner was friendly, if not quite as cordial as her mother's; she made his heart sink by blushing a little when he casually introduced his brother's name into the conversation; but indeed she did not seem to be listening very attentively to what he was saying, and he noticed a look of disquietude and apprehension on her face.

'I wish people wouldn't stare at us so!' she exclaimed, when the dance was over. 'Is it at me or at you that they are looking, do you think?'

'Oh, I expect it's at me,' answered Lord Warrender, laughing; 'I'm a sort of a dancing bear, don't you know?'

'This is our dance, Miss Wylie,' interposed an eager young man, who had pushed his way through the crowd, and who looked as if he rather anticipated a struggle for his rights.

Miss Wylie, however, did not dispute the assertion. She took the new-comer's arm at once, and her late partner, falling back a few paces, suddenly found himself shaking hands with Lady Sophia. Why was he shaking hands with her? He had done that already; but, of course, if she wished to repeat the ceremony, it was not for him to disappoint her.

'My dear Lord Warrender,' she was saying affectionately, 'I am so glad! so very glad! But not surprised; for I quite expected it. Such a pretty way of letting us all know! And everybody says you and Constance will make quite an ideal couple—so admirably suited to one another in all respects!'

Lord Warrender was just the sort of man to come out strong in a moment of emergency. His intellect was not a great one; but he had iron nerves, and never lost his presence of mind. 'I see,' said he quietly, 'you stick to what you said a year ago, and take my dancing with your daughter as equivalent to an offer of marriage. And you have been round the room, announcing the engagement to your friends.'

Lady Sophia nodded smilingly; but there was just a shadow of apprehension in her eyes. Perhaps she had not anticipated quite so ready an acquiescence. 'It is always better to make these things known at once,' said she; 'then people can't gossip

any more. They have gossipped a great deal, you know, and the affair has been going on *rather* a long time, hasn't it? We can't talk here; but you will come and see us to-morrow, won't you?'

'Perhaps,' answered Lord Warrender, gravely. 'Anyhow, we shall meet to-morrow night at Brentford House. In the meantime, I may as well tell you—or perhaps I needn't tell you?—that I have not proposed to Miss Wylie.'

With that he turned on his heel, and made for the door. But although he meant to leave the house before anyone should have time to thrust congratulations upon him which might be awkward to reply to, he did not mean to go away alone. He had caught sight of his brother, standing among several non-dancers, and on his passage he took the younger man by the arm. 'Come home with me, Claud,' he whispered; 'I want to speak to you.'

Shortly afterwards, the two brothers were in Lord Warrender's smoking-room in Portland Place. They had not exchanged a word during the short time; but now Claud, whose face was very pale, said, before taking the arm-chair which was pushed towards him:

'Look here, Warrender; I suppose I can guess what you are going to say. There's a rumour that you are engaged to Constance Wylie.'

Lord Warrender lighted a cigar deliberately. 'Are you in a position to forbid the banns?' he inquired.

'No,' answered the other, 'I am not. She won't be able to hold out against her mother. She says she will; but I know better. Perhaps she may not give in to-morrow or next week or even next month; but she will be beaten in the long run. So, if you like the idea of marrying a girl who doesn't love you, and who does love me, you have only to sit still and wait.'

Lord Warrender drew a long breath. 'I shouldn't like that idea,' he observed calmly. 'I suppose, from your saying that she loves you, you and she have come to an understanding.'

'If you can call it an understanding. I know that she loves me, because I have heard it from her own lips; but it's a perfectly hopeless case. I have a little over a thousand a year of my own, and no prospects. Even if you increased my income, as you were kind enough to say that you would do—even if you doubled it—it would make no difference. I was obliged to tell her that she was free, so far as I was concerned.'

'After drawing a confession of love from her?'

'I couldn't help that, Warrender.'

‘Well, I dare say not; most likely I should have done the same thing in your place. Now listen to me, Claud, and let us see whether between us we can’t outwit her ladyship, who, I must say, strikes me as being too clever by half.’

Thereupon Lord Warrender briefly related the circumstances which had brought about his so-called engagement to a lady whom he declared that he had not the least intention of marrying. The conference which ensued was somewhat lengthy; but it appeared to have a satisfactory termination; for when the brothers parted, the younger shook the elder warmly by the hand, exclaiming, ‘Upon my word, Warrender, you’re the best fellow out!’

‘Glad you think so,’ answered Lord Warrender, with a slight smile.

Perhaps Claud would have thought his brother an even better fellow if the whole truth had been told; but there are truths which it is desirable, if not essential, to conceal.

Lady Sophia arrived at Brentford House on the following evening with an unruffled exterior, but with a mind ill at ease. Lord Warrender had not called upon her during the day; she had passed through a painful scene with Constance, who had shown a mutinous spirit, and had addressed her most disrespectfully; and what future troubles might lie before her, she hardly dared to think. The moment that she entered the ball-room she looked anxiously round it in search of her prospective son-in-law; but he was not there, and she had to wait a whole hour before her eyes were gladdened by the sight of his tall figure advancing through the doorway, followed by that of his younger brother. He marched straight up to her, and, without wasting time upon preliminaries, plunged into the subject which was uppermost in the thoughts of both of them.

‘Lady Sophia,’ said he, ‘I have been turning over in my mind what you said last night, and although, when I asked Miss Wylie to dance with me, I did not intend asking her to be my wife, I suppose I can’t honourably back out of an engagement which you have chosen to make public. One thing, however, I must warn you of, and that is that I have naturally a very jealous and suspicious temper. I don’t know that Miss Wylie cares for me, nor have I the slightest ground for supposing that she does. Therefore, if, after this, I see her dancing twice consecutively with any man, I shall take it for granted that she is in love with that man. What is sauce for the goose (you think me a goose, don’t you?) is sauce for the gander, and I don’t see why tests that are made to apply to me shouldn’t apply to others.’

‘How absurd!’ exclaimed Lady Sophia. ‘Of course I will tell Constance what you say, and, if you choose, she shall give up dancing altogether; but really your suspicions are utterly unfounded.’

‘Do you mean to tell me, Lady Sophia, that your daughter is in love with me?’

Lady Sophia hesitated. She was playing an audacious game, and had already obtained what she believed to be a signal success; but she well knew that some hard battles remained to be fought, and that it behoved her to be circumspect. ‘Constance,’ she began, ‘is very modest and very timid—so unlike most girls of the present day! You must not expect her to rush into your arms.’

After this preface, she entered upon a lengthy exposition of the peculiarities of modest and timid characters, to which her neighbour lent a somewhat inattentive ear. He was watching Miss Wylie, who was leaving the ball-room at the conclusion of a dance, on his brother’s arm, and the moment that he saw her reappear with the same partner he moved abruptly away.

He had made his entrance without greeting his hostess: he now hastened to repair this omission. The Duchess of Brentford, who was surrounded by a phalanx of dowagers, held out her hand to him as he approached, and said exactly what he had expected her to say—‘So I hear we are to congratulate you, Lord Warrender. You are a very fortunate man, I think.’

‘Eh?—congratulate me?’ repeated Lord Warrender, assuming a puzzled look. ‘Oh! I see what you mean; but you’re putting the saddle on the wrong horse, Duchess. It’s my brother who is engaged to Miss Wylie; I thought everybody knew that I am a confirmed bachelor.’

The Duchess looked astonished, but not convinced. ‘Really?’ said she; ‘and yet it was Lady Sophia herself who told me.’

‘You must have misunderstood her; she said *Claud* Warrender, not *Lord* Warrender. For goodness’ sake, correct the report, or everybody will say I’ve been thrown over, and then I shall have all the old women in London trying to console me.’

He corrected it himself in several instances before he rejoined Lady Sophia, by whose side he sank down with a sigh of relief.

‘Lady Sophia,’ said he, ‘prepare yourself for a shock. I am not going to marry your daughter, and my brother Claud is. She has danced with him twice running, and, as I told you I should, I take that as a sign that she is in love with him. Besides, it’s the truth. I have borrowed a leaf out of your book, and been round the room telling everybody that they are engaged; I said

your announcement of last night had been misunderstood. Don't screech or make a row until you have heard what I have to say, please; you can't get out of it, and you may as well make the best of it. There's a property in Warwickshire, left me by my uncle, and worth from six to seven thousand a year, which I mean to hand over to Claud. It ought to have gone to him any way; I'm sure I don't want it; it takes me all my time to live in the houses that I've got. And that isn't all. I have reasons which I am not going to tell you, but which are perfectly respectable reasons, for thinking that I shall never marry, and Claud, as you know, is heir-presumptive. I'm a thundering bad rider; I never look where I'm going, and an accident might happen any day, don't you see?' 'A long baronet's wife, and a long baronet's wife.'

Lady Sophia bit her fan, and looked pensive. Seven thousand a year is very far from being the same thing as seventy thousand; yet in these hard times one may have to put up with less. And then, the possibilities!

'Oh!' said Lord Warrender, with a laugh, 'I don't promise to break my neck, you know; but it's an imaginable contingency, and you can keep up your spirits by thinking about it. Now, Lady Sophia, I hope we shall remain friends. Very few things are worth quarrelling over, and, for my part, now that I've paid you out in your own coin, I don't bear malice. Only you really shouldn't be so awfully clever.'

He slipped away without waiting for a rejoinder, and soon found an opportunity of offering his congratulations to his future sister-in-law, whose eyes expressed the thanks which her lips had some difficulty in framing.

Thus was accomplished a sacrifice the existence of which has never been suspected. Lady Sophia, perceiving that under no circumstances could she hope to recapture the elder brother, was fain to content herself with the younger, and before the close of the season Constance Wylie became Mrs. Warrender.

Her husband has entered Parliament, and is likely to make a career for himself; both his future and hers, as far as appearances go, will be prosperous and happy. Lord Warrender has not yet broken his neck; but perhaps it would be rash to affirm that his heart is equally intact. Broken hearts are not always made manifest to the world by pale cheeks and haggard looks; and indeed a man who has suffered the loss of his capacity for falling in love may lead a wholesome, useful, and not altogether disagreeable life, just as he may after the loss of an arm or a leg.

W. E. NORRIS.

Whist Signalling and Whist Strategy.

AN article of mine in this magazine on the question whether whist signalling is honest, has been naturally regarded by many whist players, if not by most, as heretical. Whist signalling is now so widely adopted in this country, and so many players find their only claim to be regarded as fair partners depending on their readiness in signalling and reading signals, that when the system is questioned in any way, they feel as Dominicans felt of old when tenets they regarded as sacred were dealt with as doubtful. Still they cannot deny that many excellent players are opposed to the signalling system, root and branch. Pembroke, Mogul, the whist editor of the *Australasian*, and a number of others, reject the system as absolutely spoiling the game; some (like Mr. F. H. Lewis), who use the system most skilfully, yet object to it on principle, and only use it because it has become established. A few only may deny the fairness of whist signalling, but many deny its value.

I do not propose here to touch further on the question whether whist signalling is honest. I was careful in my former article to admit that the whist-signalling code must be learned and followed by all who wish to play with those who practise it; and this practically decides the question of its honesty as actually employed. Just as gambling cannot be considered immoral for those who have never duly weighed the question of its morality, so whist signalling is perfectly fair for those who have not noticed or duly considered the circumstances which make it almost as unfair, in reality, as kicking under the table would be. On this point I would only add that Cavendish himself, who has long been the chief champion of whist signalling, shows his intrinsic estimation of its unfairness by his anxious attempts to prove that all the signals are merely developments of the principles of whist strategy. He evidently feels, as every real player of the game must feel, that the question of honesty turns alto-

gether on this point. If the signals are arbitrary, they are as unfair as coughing, sneezing, or drumming on the table, used for signalling, would admittedly be. If they are actual developments of strategic principles, they are, of course, perfectly fair. I directed my argument wholly to this point. Unless I mistake (and no one has shown any flaw in my reasoning), I showed that there are at least two errors in the idea that the signals are developments of principles. There is no development in question, and no principle is involved: in all other respects perhaps Cavendish may be pretty nearly right.

But now I propose to consider rather the value than the propriety of whist signalling, knowing that players are not likely to be very ready to question the fairness of methods of play which they consider to be advantageous.

In the first place it should be remembered that the finest whist players yet known knew nothing of our signals. It would probably have surprised Deschappelles had he been told that the time would come when persons calling themselves whist players would think more of a number of arbitrary signals, taxing only the attention, than of all the points of strategy which he and his contemporaries regarded as the essence of the game. He would probably have been rather more than surprised if he had heard of such a saying as a critic in the *Pall Mall Gazette* got off against me, that whist without signalling is, in fact, whist without a purpose. Clay used to say that he had never played with anyone who came near Deschappelles for rapidity in recognising when there would arise occasion for playing the *grand coup* (that is undertrumping his partner or throwing away a winning card to avoid the lead when leading would involve the loss of a trick out of two which might both be made if the coup player were led up to). *This is whist.* It is strategy of this sort which alone makes the game worth playing by intelligent persons, who need something more than mere pip-counting to get enjoyment out of a card game. But how many of the modern whist players, whose whole attention is directed to watching for Peters, Echoes, Penultimates, and for opportunities for displaying these signals, ever see the occasion for the *coup*, even when it stares them in the face? As for seeing it four or five tricks ahead, not one of them ever does. Even the great high priest of the signalling system knows so little in actual practice of the *grand coup*, that a dozen editions of his book on whist contained, as an example of this stroke of strategy, a hand in which he himself had done his best to throw

away a certain game by resorting to the *coup* unnecessarily. In his Essays, Cavendish refers to this particular hand as a triumph of whist strategy; and it was not until Mogul, the arch-enemy of conventional whist, pointed out the rottenness of the play, that this triumphant example of the *grand coup* was finally dismissed to its appropriate limbo. One wonders what Deschapelles would have thought of this. If he could study the game just as Cavendish played it, having also had the signals explained to him, for they come in to make Cavendish's mistakes less excusable, he would probably have spoken somewhat as follows:—'Aha! I see, this system is excellent—for *your adversaries*. This chief teacher of yours is carefully shown by his adversary, on the left, that he has five diamonds. *My* adversaries were not so accommodating. And then, having considerably exhausted his mind (so I must imagine) in looking out for this signal, he forthwith proceeds to avoid two obvious paths to victory, in order to adopt a course which gives five chances to one against success. Or *peut-être*, in this new whist, which is, I perceive, somewhat conventional, there is a certain satisfaction in playing the *grand coup*, even when it is more likely to do harm than good. *We* were so simple (you may hardly credit it) that positively we thought more of winning or saving the game than we did of playing *coups*. Of the signals we knew nothing, and so could give our adversaries none of the information you considerably supply them with.'

This would not be simply *persiflage*. There is a truth well worth considering by whist players, underlying it all. Here is the most accomplished (I do not say the best) whist player of the day, not only failing utterly in a point of whist strategy in actual play, but actually failing to see his mistakes when studying the game through at his leisure. None of the signal-lovers who study his book note the mistakes affecting their master's play. Content to observe that all the signals are duly hoisted throughout the game, they find nothing wrong in the strategy. It is only when the game comes to be looked over by one who cares more for whist strategy than for pip-counting with the signallers, that the mistakes are found out.

Does not this look as though modern signalling whist were altogether inferior to the old-fashioned scientific, that is to say strategic, game?

And now let us see how far the use of the various signals affects whist strategy.

Of course no whist player can doubt that in the majority of

cases two partners gain more by the information they may legitimately convey to each other, when playing in accordance with customary methods, than they lose by conveying information to their enemies. It is a prevalent opinion with players, not acquainted with whist principles, that if a player does harm by confusing his partner, he does more good to their common cause by confusing the enemies. But experience shows that this is not the case. Cavendish and others—myself included—have given various reasons for this observed fact. But reasoning is not necessary; for the point is one which must necessarily be determined by experience. And now by a century and a half of experience the matter has been settled. If however I were asked what, after careful study of the matter, I regarded as the reason for the invariable failure of irregular play against combined play, I should say that if two partners misunderstand each other, their whole play is divided; whereas their two opponents, if working together, are but partially affected by such misunderstanding of their opponents' manœuvres. The case may be compared to a contest between a force of—say—2,600 men, against two ill-commanded bodies, each of 1,300 men; these two bodies, not working in harmony, may, in some degree, distract the attention of the combined force against which they are working; but this will not prevent their being separately crushed as the contest proceeds.

It must be admitted, however, that Mathews, eighty years since, laid down the correct limits of this doctrine when he pointed out that when two partners have between them fair strength an open game is best; but where there is weakness, it is generally better to play more cautiously, as information will be then of more use to the enemy than to the partner. He very plainly advocates, however, what many suppose to be peculiar to modern whist. 'The more plainly you demonstrate your hand to your partner,' he says, 'the better. Be particularly cautious not to deceive him in his or your own leads, or when he is likely to have the lead. A concealed game may now and then succeed in the suits of your adversaries, but this should not be attempted before you have made a considerable proficiency, and then but seldom, as its frequency would destroy the effect.'

Now it appears at a first view as though this first principle of whist disposed of the whole question. The various conventions at whist nearly all relate to strong hands; and the kind of information they are calculated to give is therefore nearly always

likely—if the general principles of whist are carefully attended to—to be advantageous.

But this theoretical advantage, even if its existence be admitted, in the case of very skilful players, has to be largely discounted when we consider players of average strength, or even many who possess far more than average ability.

It must be remembered that not one player in a thousand notes, in an ordinary hand at whist, every point of play which—assuming there has been no underplay—may throw light on the position of the cards. For all but the whist genius, who is in full practice, and who has strengthened his whist powers (of memory, attention, combination, and so forth) by unremitting, time-wasting assiduity, so as to convert a pleasing recreation into a weariness of the flesh, the various points involved in the system of whist conventions suffice to occupy all the attention, and to tax memory to the utmost. Players of considerable capacity for the game have all power for whist strategy driven out of them by the distraction which the constant watch for signals of various sorts, and for opportunities of displaying them, naturally produces. They signal and echo, play penultimates or ante-penultimates, or adopt in its full complexity the American ‘fourth-best’ system; and perhaps they acquire a sure habit of noticing these conventions not only when played by their partner but as played by their adversaries. There, however, their whist powers are limited. Whist strategy, which perhaps but for their devotion to whist signalling they might become fairly proficient in, is an unknown art to them. They neither know how to exercise nor how to oppose it. They do not even see the opportunity for its exercise or the occasion for its encounter, as one or the other arises. Their method involves so great a strain upon the attention that no power is left for the exercise of strategic skill.

This is not mere assertion. No one who plays much at whist, varying often his company, can fail to notice repeated examples of utterly stupid play by those who are most constant and unrelaxing in their devotion to the signalling system. If whist strategy, properly so called, were not becoming a thing of the past (in consequence chiefly, I firmly believe, of the deadening influence of the conventional game), I could startle whist-players by recording marvellous examples of foolish play such as in the old times one never heard of. Now, however, they would hardly be appreciated as they deserve.

Consider such a case as the following, which I saw in the last

game I watched before these words were written:—A and B were playing against Y and Z. After A had played two rounds of hearts, he led trumps (spades) in response to B's signal. Now it so chanced that B's signal, as is frequently the case, was a piece of whist folly, being just what was wanted to show Y and Z how they must play to save the game. However, they failed to save it, through a piece of still more absurd folly—a most unscientific adherence to certain wooden conventions which have recently been in vogue, though there were the clearest indications of the proper strategic course for saving the game. Z indeed played correctly enough. He had control over the heart suit, and retained it. But Y found himself after a round of trumps with six diamonds, headed by the queen, three clubs headed by the queen, and a small heart. Trumps being led, for the second round of them, by B, it should have been obvious to Y that he must not discard a club, because then probably he would lose control of the suit; nor a diamond, because his partner would then be apt to suppose diamonds the suit he wished led (this being the recent interpretation of a discard made to trump strength with the enemy), and the lead of diamonds by Z would plainly be of little service to Y and Z. Clearly Y should throw away his useless heart. But in adherence to modern whist conventions Y discarded a diamond. So far, however, no harm had been done. At the next round—trumps, which again came from the enemy—Y played far more foolishly. With the idea that having now shown his long suit he would do well to retain some strength in it, and that his next best discard was from the next longest suit, he discarded a club, though he still had a perfectly useless card to throw away. The natural result followed. The third round of trumps fell to Z, who still remained with one trump. Z led a diamond, retaining the master-card in hearts; the trick went to the enemy, and Y lost the queen—his only good diamond. B then drew Z's last trump, led clubs—B's suit; A B made the ace and king, drawing Y's queen, and then made the knave of clubs and two tricks with small clubs. The last trick fell to the king of diamonds, held by A. A and B thus made six by cards.

Now this unfortunate result was not due to the mischance of whist war. It was not even due to careless or ordinarily bad play. It was due to sheer stupidity, such as could scarcely have been displayed except by one whose whist intellect had been dulled by the signalling system and the acceptance of recent fads as constant and unailing whist rules.

Consider what would have happened, and what—be it noticed—Y-Z were entitled to expect, had common sense guided Y's play.

Four tricks had fallen to A-B. At the fourth Y should have discarded the small heart. As that was the enemy's suit, Z would be certain not to mistake the discard for an indication of length. At the fifth round (trumps' third round), taken by Z, a small diamond was the only discard to be thought of. Z would infer that diamonds were Y's longest suit, but not a suit strong enough to be indicated by the discard as one to be led by Z, *if Z's own hand afforded better resource*. Z would, however, have led a diamond, as the only course open to him, and the trick would have gone to the enemy, as before, making their fifth. The enemy would then have led trumps, as before, to draw Z's last, though at the expense of using two for one; for this, right or wrong, was what they did in the actual game. Two rounds of clubs would then have been taken by A-B, as in the actual game, making eight tricks to them in all. But they would have made only one more trick, instead of three more as in the game actually played; for on B leading a club the trick would have gone to Y, and a diamond lead, giving one trick to A in diamonds, would have forced a heart lead from him, giving the two remaining tricks to Z, who remained with the major tenace in hearts. Thus the game, the players having been at love all, would have been saved by two points.

Now there is nothing striking about the play here considered. It is simply commonplace whist strategy, such as no one having the least *aperçu* of the game could possibly avoid. But it is in just such matters as these that the modern average player, trained to regard the signals and conventions as the essential points of whist strategy, constantly blunders. He plays and notes all the conventional signals; he follows unquestioningly all the suggestions of the books; he learns the leads and the discards as means of conveying information. But of whist strategy he knows nothing. Of the lead as directed to obtaining control or full command of a suit, of the discard as guided by the necessity of protecting the various suits, he has no conception whatever. He does not even know how he loses trick after trick, and with them rubber after rubber which might have been saved. He gives up the defence of a suit, and then considers the enemy had rare luck, or had displayed marvellous skill in getting possession of it. One-tenth of the attention he directs to conven-

tional matters, if directed instead to the essential points of whist strategy, would save him a point or two, on the average, in every rubber; but he knows nothing of this, and attributes to bad luck what is the direct and inevitable effect of bad strategy. For be it noticed that there is no more positive believer in the absurd superstitions associated with luck than your hopelessly bad player.

One of the most remarkable results of the signalling system, when thoroughly brought into vogue in a company of players of no exceptional strength, is the singular disproportion between the ability displayed in signalling and the power to make use of the knowledge obtained from signals. Your conventional player signals and counter-signals like Harlequin; but he is generally as helpless as Pantaloon to get any good from the knowledge he thus obtains. I recently asked a player, who thinks a good deal of his skill, why he signalled when strong in trumps. He answered readily, and rightly enough (though only parrot-like), 'Because I want my partner to know that I am strong in trumps, and that we ought to play a forward game.' When I asked, however, what he meant by a forward game, and what he considered the proper method of playing such a game, it appeared that his ideas were confused in the extreme. 'Oh, of course one knows what a forward game is; it means a game in which one tries to make a large number of tricks; my partner knows I have plenty of trumps, so that I can probably ruff one of the plain suits, if not two, and get extra tricks that way; or we may get a cross ruff; or—or—bring in a long suit—in fine, we may take advantage of our strength generally.' Is this too absurd to be believed? Ask ten players who fancy their whist, and are proud in their knowledge of all the signals, what is the proper way of utilising the information given by the signal, and seven out of the ten will talk just such nonsense. Nine out of ten who regard the Peter, the Echo, and the Penultimate (or original fourth) as the soul of the scientific game, show in actual practice that they think they have done all they need do when in response to the signal they have led trumps. Not quite so many, but at least one half of the ten are quite capable of the enormity of forcing their partner, trumps having been played for a round or two, after it has become clear that one of the enemy matches him in trump strength. A day or two since, watching a game which presented fine opportunities for strategy, I witnessed the following almost incredible proceedings:—A had responded to a Peter by his partner B, the round in which the signal was completed establishing A's suit,

originally a five-card one. Three rounds of trumps showed Z to be of equal trump strength numerically with B the signaller, each now retaining one trump, Z's the higher. Y led from a long suit, in which, after two rounds, it appeared that all the remaining strength lay between him and Z, who had three cards left in it, B having none. A had taken the last round in this suit, and now had to lead. If he had only led from his established suit, forcing Z, it was all up with Y-Z, whether Z yielded to the force at once or not. If Z would not yield to the force at all, three tricks went to A, who could then lead his partner's suit, which must be very strong since he had signalled and shown weakness in the two other plain suits. If Z yielded to the force, then either he must lead Y's suit or B's. If the former, B trumps, and A-B make all the remaining tricks; if the latter, A-B equally make all the remaining tricks. A-B would thus have made four by cards, and (as it chanced) the game, for they stood at 1 to love. What A actually did showed that the most marked skill in regard to whist conventions may be accompanied by utter ineptitude—one might almost say imbecility—in regard to whist strategy. He deliberately forced his partner by leading Y's suit! B had no choice but to yield to the fatal stroke of his partner, howsoever he may have wailed *Et tu Brute*, in his heart. For, if he had resisted, Y would have taken the trick, very properly playing his best in order to get out of Z's way, who, it appeared, had originally held five in that suit. Y would have led the suit again, and if B again passed the trick, Z would have taken it, drawn B's last trump, made another trick in his long suit, and the same evil would have resulted which actually befel A-B. B trumped then, and led his own suit, making two tricks in it; but then Z ruffed, led Y's suit, and though the hand did not result in Y-Z's favour, A-B's strength being overwhelming, A-B made only two by cards, instead of four as they would had A played correctly.

When B remonstrated with his partner, A replied in a way which even more clearly indicated his ignorance of whist strategy than his bad play itself. (For a man may play badly through carelessness; defended bad play is much more significant.) 'I saw your trump would fall to Z's,' he was good enough to explain, 'unless I gave you a chance of making it; so I led a suit which I knew you could ruff.' To enable B to make that one trick, A had spoiled the whole of B's strategy, and enabled Y-Z to save a lost game.

Here, again, a very simple point of whist strategy was in question; nor could it be said that the signalling system was responsible for the bad play shown by A. But no one can play much at whist in these days without recognising that attention to the conventionalities recently introduced has led to a marked falling off in regard to whist strategy, even in such simple matters as these. Men display the Peter or respond to it, and presently adopt a line of play the precise reverse of that which the Peter is intended to originate,—playing the strong hands as if they were weak ones, precisely as bad sailors make a foul wind of a fair one by false tacks.

Perhaps the most effective way of showing how the signalling system has injured the game regarded as a recreation, is by comparing what was expected from the Peter when it had recently been invented with what is now recognised as its natural effect. Clay, who, like all the finest players of his day, objected strongly to the introduction of the Blue Peter, remarked that the inventor of the signal ('he who claimed the credit, if there were any, of inventing the Peter') had expressed his belief that the invention had deprived him of half the advantage arising from his skill in whist strategy. That was a natural view to take at that time. The introduction of a simple signal for leading trumps, among a number of players accustomed to measure their strategic powers against each other without any such artificial assistance, seemed naturally a boon to the weaker players. For an essential quality of the strong whist player is the quick recognition of the proper time for opening trumps, either because of the strength of his own hand, or because he has felt that his partner's hand requires a trump lead. Repeatedly the weaker players in those times, when whist depended on skill in combination, not on mere attention to conventional signs, must have felt how effectively the superior insight of the stronger players told in this matter of opening trumps. Gladly they must have hailed the introduction of a system by which the weakest partner could be forced to see that trumps were wanted. And in this way, beyond a doubt, the signalling system helped the weaker players at that time.

But how does the matter stand now? So far from helping the weaker players, and making the game better because more even, the signalling system has given an immense pull to the stronger players over the weaker. And this in more ways than one.

In the first place, the weaker players are not content with responding to the Peter displayed by a partner who understands the strategy of the game. They display the signal at every

opportunity, good, bad, or indifferent, without possessing any sufficient insight into the principles of whist strategy to avail themselves of the advantage of getting the trump lead they signal for (supposing that by chance the trump lead really might be an advantage for their game). Or they adopt some cut-and-dried rule for signalling, such as Mr. Pole's rule (for beginners, too!) to signal always from five trumps, and are content to follow that rule without the least idea of the object supposed to be in view when trumps are opened early.

This is a serious mischief, of itself sufficing to make the signal injurious to the game of any but strong strategic whist-players. But this is far from being all.

For, in the second place, the admission of the Peter (which ought to have been stopped at the outset by a most rigid rule of whist etiquette—as imperative against signalling with small cards¹ as against kicking under the table) has led the way to a whole series of conventions and so-called developments of whist principles, the admitted purpose of which is to bring four-handed whist as close as possible to the double dummy game. Now anyone who has ever played much at double dummy knows that of all forms of whist this is the one which depends most on skill in whist strategy. So surely does such skill tell in double dummy, that the effect of chance seems entirely eliminated. If I am going to play for ten or twelve evenings at double dummy with an antagonist whose skill I have already gauged, I feel as certain what the result of the long series of games will be as though chance had no part even in single hands. Again and again I have tested the matter, and repeatedly with the same results,—against this player I win such and such a percentage, against that such and such another percentage; with A, I know the results will come out as nearly even as may be; with B, I know that I shall always in the long run have somewhat the worse. (For, be it understood, though a man may speak with just confidence on points of theory at whist, in actual play the long-continued practice of those with whom whist is not a recreation at all, but a business, tells effectively on the score. And *vice versa*: Deschappelles would have beaten any living player at the table, but Deschappelles writing about whist could say nothing worth reading.) Since, then, double dummy depends more on skill than any other whist game, it is obvious that modern whist with a conventional

¹ The 'scare,' or play of a high card to scare the enemy into leading trumps, is of course a thoroughly legitimate piece of whist strategy. Indeed, one of the most unsatisfactory results of the introduction of the Peter has been the foiling of this effective stroke.

system directly intended to approximate the four-handed game to double dummy, must depend more on skill than the older game in which signalling was unknown.

This is by no means saying that the game has been improved; for precisely the same could be said if the modern game allowed signals outside the play of the cards themselves. The game would be more difficult, slower, less recreative, if each player had his cards displayed face upwards before him. In fact, I may remark in passing, that whist thus played, though difficult, is a singularly fine game for those acquainted with the principles of whist strategy.

When we add to this the consideration that, with the signalling system, the weaker players are not only engaged in a more difficult game because of the approximation of the game to double dummy, but that this difficulty is enhanced by a heavy tax on the memory and attention, it will be admitted that they are more heavily handicapped now, when opposed to really fine players, than they were when the older game was played.

It is practically certain that the signalling system will not be checked by any rules (of *etiquette*, for no *laws* can be passed against it) making signalling an offence against whist manners. It is too profitable to the strong players; and whether playing for money or for love, the strong players will forego no advantage which may enhance their superiority. But the weaker players, and those among the strong who are generously disposed, are not without the means of checking the evil. Let them thoroughly master the signalling system (all but the 'echo in plain suits' which is simply chaotic), let them fall into the constant habit of noting it as played by the enemy (they will find this always useful, and learn rather to despise a method which helps their own play so much); but let them refrain from signalling themselves and constantly inform each partner they may play with, that, should *he* signal, he will only be enlightening the enemy, not advancing his or their game. I urge this as a course by which players of moderate strength may deprive the signalling system of more than half its mischievous effects, and yet enjoy their recreational rubber. For strong players matched against players of their own calibre, there is perhaps no other resource but to play the signalling system, difficult and wearisome though it may have made the game. It is not four-handed whist, as known to the finest players of old times, which is thus played, however, but an entirely different and much less attractive game.

RICHARD A. PROCTOR.

At Sunset.

I LOVE, when autumn days are done
 And all the winds at rest,
 To sit and watch the happy sun
 Go out into the west ;
 To let my idle fancy stray
 Across the waters' golden way ;

To follow, follow, follow on
 Until the gleaming land
 Has sunk beneath the waves and gone
 Like castles on the sand ;
 To follow till I gain at last
 The charmed country of the past.

There in the glamour of romance,
 By forest, plain, and hill,
 With crested helm and glittering lance
 The knights are riding still,
 And many a hoary castle wall
 Echoes at eve their bugle-call.

There cruise the bearded buccaneers
 Who swept the Spanish main ;
 There gather to the feast of spears
 The ravens of the Dane,
 And to the shining summer skies
 The old sea-rovers' war-songs rise.

And there are low soft melodies
 About the shadowy shore,
 Where the stars tremble on the seas
 Beneath the silent oar ;
 Music of lutes and serenade,
 Sweet songs by happy lovers made.

AT SUNSET.

There, clash of steel on steel, and shout
Of battle wildly ring ;
Granada's Moors are riding out
To meet the Christian king,
And all the chivalry of Spain
Is fighting for the Cross again.

There by the glancing river's side,
Out through the morning mists,
Gay lords and ladies laughing ride
With hawks upon their wrists ;
The soft winds bear across the fells
The music of their silver bells.

There, stretched the drowsy pines among,
The Lotos-eaters be ;
There still the sirens' fatal song
Is sweet upon the sea,
And through the woodland and the stream
The nymphs and naiads glide and gleam.

The golden glow falls pale and dim
Far in the western sky,
Where on the water's utmost rim
The ships go sailing by.
That fair world fades away once more
And leaves me lonely by the shore.

D. J. ROBERTSON.

Little Selborne.

EVERY observer of nature has his favourite hunting ground. The edge of a wood skirting a road, along which his daily walk takes him, pleases one; another is contented with an old pear tree in the garden. A river's banks are a perpetual source of interest to almost every lover of the country. After all, it is not the locality so much as the eyes scanning it which furnish the perennial pleasures of a naturalist. No place is too bare for some kind of animal life in our islands; diligence and careful watching are sure to reward an observer even in the most unlikely-looking places for his game. The study of birds from a window is a great resource to an invalid. Our own Little Selborne runs for a quarter of a mile by the side of a brook in the dear, but alas! the tearful, West Country. This brook is mostly overhung by oaks and elms, with here and there mimic woods of alder, while a few birches and elders, pleasantly diversified with tufts of hemp agrimony and golden rod, furnish variety to the birds which love the water as well as the admiring eye of the passer-by. Wild flowers never flourish better than by such a stream. Here, each in its season, violets, mullein, and foxgloves, which an enlightened farmer would call weeds, abound everywhere. If agricultural depression possess any charms, it is to the lover of nature, and that because impecuniosity prevents farmers from ruthlessly cutting down hedges and stubbing up roots and wild flowers. Thanks to the prevailing depression, therefore, round this brook are fine plantations of flourishing thistles, the joy of finches, and of birdcatchers if such gentry were here allowed. On the hill above is a 'hanger' incomparably finer than its prototype in Gilbert White's parish as respects trees, these being old oaks, yews, and thorns for the most part, whereas the Selborne hanger is composed of beeches. Beeches, however, when they predominate in a landscape, give it the warm russet tints in autumn which are so consonant to the poetical descriptions of frost 'laying

his fiery finger' on the leaves and the like, and which render such a county as Bucks at that season so characteristically beautiful. A Comb Wood, such as White esteemed for its echoes, is on the right hand; indeed (as with White) 'the whole of this district is an Anathoth, a place of responsive echoes.' Especially is this noticeable when the pheasants are being shot in October. Then the roar and rattle of the fusillade is echoed and re-echoed from hill and wooded bluff all round. Here White's own lines are exactly reflected :

Each rural sight, each sound, each smell, combine ;
The tinkling sheep bell or the breath of kine ;
The new-mown hay that scents the swelling breeze,
Or cottage chimneys smoking through the trees.

He laments the scarcity of spires round the Hampshire Selborne, 'for such objects are very necessary ingredients in an elegant landscape;' but here not only is Eleanor of Provence's beautifully proportioned spire of Grosmont seen crowning the hill on which that village is built, but also the long curtain, tower, and stately chimney shaft of its erstwhile royal castle may be descried. Here, then, in our mimic Selborne,

Nature's works the curious mind employ,
Inspire a soothing melancholy joy ;
As fancy warms, a pleasing kind of pain
Steals o'er the cheek and thrills the creeping vein.

Indeed, the Lilliputian copy excels the original, for White sorely missed water in his bird paradise; the brook here leaps and sparkles along with many a pool till at length it falls into the Monnow.

Not many quadrupeds are visible as a general rule in or around this delightful brook. Rabbits abound, but were sorely decimated by the great flood of May 1886, which entered the burrows and drowned old and young together. Unlike the hare, rabbits soon recover such a loss. The dormouse sleeps at the root of the hollow trees hereabouts, and we saw a water rat, which also had been floated out of its usual burrows, sheltering and terrified at the swelling waters as it sat on a stump afraid to launch out into the rushing stream. Many rats and rabbits are killed during floods in this district by loafers and boys. The former animals are seen floating and swimming in the swift currents, unable to land, and are soon knocked on the head; the latter run about on

the banks and are killed, as their burrows are submerged. Exactly twenty years ago that beautiful little animal, the marten, now becoming so scarce not in England only but also in Scotland, was last seen in the parish, running up and down the trees overhanging our Little Selborne. In 1878 one was trapped about four miles away, which is now in the British Museum, and another was seen crossing a little river by means of a fallen tree a mile off so lately as 1884, so that it may be trusted the marten is not wholly extinct in South Herefordshire. The last that was seen was carrying an unfortunate rat in its mouth.

Otters occasionally ramble up our brook from the river into which it flows, but it is always easier to find them in it. Only this summer two little ones were seen with their mother rolling over and over in the moonlight on the top of a deep pool. She was evidently teaching them how to catch fish, just as tigers are often seen in the Indian jungles showing their cubs how to kill. Once or twice a year otter hounds visit the river. On the only occasion when we went with them the proceedings resembled Hamlet without the hero, otter hunting because there was no otter. But the sport was excellent. To rise earlier than usual on a lovely August morning and ramble beside the banks of a river, diversified here by rapids, there by woods running down to it, and again by high cliffs and long gravel beds waving with the characteristic flowers of such a locality, to breathe fresh air and be met at every step by new prospects, while a pack of hounds splash therein incessantly in the water, and a number of eager people accompany them, each cheering and shouting and becoming highly excited if a hound does but give tongue upon some old 'spoor'—this is a spectacle and an occupation exceedingly grateful to the social philosopher. Nor is his pleasure a whit lessened because nothing is killed. It is still possible for him to indulge the hope that in the evening, as he quietly fishes along the windings of the river, at any corner he may come upon the old one with her cubs. And after all it is an infinitesimally small amount of mischief that a few otters do to a trout stream, probably nothing like the damage inflicted by the constant visits of the three or four herons usually found on the reaches of our river. Both bird and quadruped—if we so decide the otter to be when a whole College of Carthusians doubted whether it be not rather fish)—both bird and quadruped feed by preference on eels if they can be obtained. Let the trout preserver, therefore, cease to molest the otter, and, paradox though it sounds, protect his eels if he would foster his trout.

From trout to crayfish the connection is but verbal, but it is worth noticing that in our brook it was that the crayfish, hitherto unknown in the district, was discovered. He is a bold man who would attempt to describe either this crustacean or its habits after Professor Huxley's excellent monograph on it. It is curious, when the variety of bird life round Little Selborne is taken into consideration, to remember how brief is the list of fishes in the Monnow. Salmon cannot ascend above the weir at Monmouth, but trout abound, and this last summer grayling, which a few years ago were placed in a tributary, have dropped down and made their appearance in the main river; chub swim sullenly in every deep hole, a perch or two and a gudgeon have been caught to testify to their presence in the Monnow, while every now and then the trout fishers in the upper waters tremble because a large pike is reported to be infesting their preserves. Probably the river contains dace too, but there the list appears to end. It is very different if the Trent be contrasted with it; in this river Drayton and Cotton assert there are thirty kinds of fish, and state that this is the origin of its name, Trent. Modern philology knows better, but it certainly holds many more distinct kinds of fish than does the Monnow. There are two or three neighbouring falls in this river caused by the end of a mill pond or the like. Up these in the end of October it is singular to see the trout rushing, and then throwing themselves in vain high out of the water if haply they may get above the obstacle. But all their efforts are fruitless until a freshet comes. In the mean time over and over again they are swept back by the foaming currents into the great pool at the bottom of such weirs and dams, like the soldiers who first tried to enter the breach at Badajoz.

But the great charm of Little Selborne consists, as with its prototype, in the birds which haunt it. Here the first willow wrens and wood wrens of the spring may be seen flitting in and out of the alders, and the swallows, their speedy successors, first dart up and down bringing summer on their wings. Even in winter a couple of water ouzels frequent the brook, some say in order that they may eat the spawn of the trout which breed there; but so characteristic of the locality are these pretty white-collared birds that these suspicions shall not be hinted to any trout preserver. The grey wagtail, too (*Motacilla boarula*), with its beautiful yellow plumage, haunts the stream in the winter months seemingly with his brood of last year. This family party enlivens our walks in the deadest period of the year. Last

summer the nest of a sandpiper (*Totanus hypoleucus*) was taken hard by with four eggs in it. One of the last buzzards caught in the district was trapped by means of a dead rabbit among the oaks here a year or two ago. Whatever may be the case with the common buzzard on the hillsides, it will not in captivity kill its own prey, thus justifying the poor opinion which our forefathers held of it as a hawk. One which we have kept for some months lives in perfect amity in a large shed with a couple of tame rabbits. The keeper is far too vigilant to allow many hawks hereabouts. The sparrowhawk and harmless kestrel pay frequent visits, however, and not far off we noticed a merlin in November, while a friend observed another a few miles off flying across his path with a hapless blackbird in its claws. Only the other day a sprightly company of some thirty goldfinches was flitting from thistle to thistle in the neighbouring field. How much of the bird life of the kingdom has been lost by high farming and over-preservation of game! Many districts have now become wildernesses so far as any save the commonest of birds are concerned. Still, in autumn the robin sits here despondently among the dripping sprays. Would you know the reason of his sadness? Every autumn, according to a rustic interviewed close at hand, the young robins kill off their parents. 'You may see the old ones sitting despondent,' he added, 'at such times because they know their time is come, and after a time they will be found dead under the hedges.' On our venturing to suggest that cats might have killed them, he allowed it might be so, but (happy thought) 'it could not be cats, sir, or else they would have eaten the birds.' A few years ago the redbreast was the most popular of British birds, and neither Christmas card nor Christmas carol was *en règle* if it did not possess some reference to this winter favourite. There is something of a reaction now setting in. Without espousing the article of Herefordshire folklore given above, it is yet certain that the redbreast is a morose and quarrelsome bird. It lives in the woods and fields most of the summer and autumn, and comes to our doors only when necessity compels it. Long ago White of Selborne remarked too that, 'notwithstanding the prejudices in their favour, redbreasts do much mischief in gardens to the summer fruits.'¹

Wood pigeons abound near the brook, feeding on the acorns under the oaks in large companies, and roosting in a wood opposite. In spring the pretty turtle dove appears, but does not seem

¹ *Selborne*, p. 81, ed. Sir Wm. Jardine, 1853.

to tarry long in the district. The redbacked shrike is a summer visitor, and breeds here. Indeed, all through the hot months a cloud of small birds is flying round our Little Selborne, hovering above, singing and twittering beneath, until the observer thinks that if he worked here for a century he would never learn to discriminate each and know the varied idiosyncrasies of all. There are plenty of apple trees in an orchard close at hand with mistletoe growing profusely upon them; the hawthorns and white poplars which abound are many of them hung with it. The hedgehogs by the brook, according to the folklore of the district, obtain apples by rolling on them and carrying them off on their spines. Magpies, thanks to game preservation, are seldom seen here. There are two kinds of them, as says here popular belief. One kind builds in high trees, the other in hawthorn bushes, and only these if taken young can ever be taught to speak. Even then they require to be kept for two years. The folklore of the district about wild creatures is copious. It is curious that much of it yet retains its vitality, and that these should be chiefly superstitions which will not for a moment bear the test of experience. Thus, the adder is far from uncommon in the neighbourhood, and yet the sages of Little Selborne gravely affirm, as if books and board schools had no existence around them, that if a man runs a thorn into his finger, the skin of an adder put on the opposite side of the finger will drive it out, but if applied over the thorn it will at once drive it farther in. It is asserted, too, that a certain cure against cramp is to bind an eel skin round each knee.

When moonlight is dappled around the brook by the dark shades of the oaks, no more appropriate spot for a fairies' revel could be imagined, and yet the little folk have not been seen here. Two miles off, however, is a meadow famous for their dancings on summer eves. An old woman, lately dead, had often heard their merriment and the sound of their elfin music, and on visiting the mead next day was sure to find the grass trampled down by them in circles. Witches frequently ride horses left in the fields here at night. In the morning the poor animals are covered with perspiration and foam flakes, and tremble violently. If their manes be then examined, some locks will be found curiously twisted together. These are the 'witches' stirrups;' they cannot be untied, and can only be cut by the aid of steel. It is impossible to comb them out. The most fearsome, however, of all nocturnal visitants is Will-o'-the-Wisp, and this apparition has been often observed by the side of the brook. The popular belief

is, that if the person who sees it does not at once lay hold of some solid substance, he will be drawn onwards by Will and perhaps drowned. 'I have seen it once,' said a stout young fellow, 'and I instantly caught hold of the gate and was safe.'

The beauty of Little Selborne's vegetation, its abundance of wildings, and the luxuriance of its tree life, remind the classical scholar of nothing so much as the scenery around Calypso's dwelling—the cave where the 'well-tressed' goddess, beside a fire of fragrant cedar chips and sandal wood, sang with sweet voice as she plied her golden shuttle. And all around was a wood of alder and poplar and sweet-smelling cypress, where many long-winged birds flew, owls and hawks and chattering crows. It would not be hard also to find here the four founts bubbling over with white water, round which extended soft meads, all violets and parsley, 'where, indeed, even an immortal, were he to stray, would rejoice at the prospect and be delighted in his heart.' Of course, for abundant and luxurious vegetation, low ground rather than high must be sought. Homer admires the hills, but loves low-lying grounds with a poet's eye for their tangled shrubs and flowers. So it is that his beautiful descriptions rush into the mind near Little Selborne. The plane tree at Aulis, and the spring of fresh water gushing from its roots, the asphodel mead of Hades, the galingale and lotus of Sparta, the crocus and hyacinth of Zeus's nuptial couch—these or their analogues are reproduced in this low well-sheltered meadow, as we find them in the imperishable verses of the old blind poet. Where the river receives the brook, may be viewed in miniature the landscape seen in Cyclops' island, as translated by P. S. Worsley, alas! too soon removed from earth:

Fast by the margin of the hoary deep

Lie soft well-watered meadows. There the vine

Would bloom for ever. If to plough and reap,

Observant of the hours, one's heart incline,

Black with fertility the soil doth shine.

Smooth is the haven, nor is need at all

Of anchor, cable, and shore-fastened line.

Floating in shelter of that firm sea wall,

Sailors at will may rest till prosperous breezes call.

It is this juxtaposition of ancient and nineteenth century beauty which charms the mind here, and bids it bless the magical power of association.

Both the glow- and the slow-worm, creatures widely different, may be found in the sward. Justly as the poets have praised the former, words do but faint justice to its soft green lambent flame. Familiarity never enables those who have no special taste for snake and serpent life to look with equanimity upon the innocent blind worm. Country folk too often ruthlessly destroy it. Several were caught and put in a cucumber frame, and of course the gardener considered himself absolved when the plants did badly and the cucumbers were small and limited; 'them nasty snakes had sucked away the earth from the plants' roots.' Squirrels play up and down the trees overhanging the brook throughout the year. Hibernation with them must be very partial. Even with snow on the ground we have seen two skipping over it, and running up and down their favourite trees. The popular stories of most natural history works require to be considerably amended about the squirrel's winter economy. Only in extremely cold weather can the creature properly be said to hibernate.

One of the most interesting of river birds is the water ouzel (*Vinclus aquaticus*), known here in Herefordshire as the 'water blackbird.' It remains with us throughout the year, and may be heard singing in the sunny gleams of winter, from its boulder jutting out of the foam in the stream, as briskly as during summer. It must be a very hardy bird, and we have seen it plunge into the water and fish under a long current on an icy cold day with perfect indifference. Its food is supposed to consist entirely of water beetles, the *larvæ* of dragon flies, mayflies, caddis worms, and the like. Many trout fishers execrate and shoot the poor dipper, but we believe that trout spawn has never been found within a dipper, while the creatures which it does eat are many of them destructive to spawn. In many parts of the country the dipper is never seen, but in all hilly and wooded districts as it flies up and down the stream it lends a fresh interest in it to the soothing rush of running water.

Little Selborne is highly favoured by Flora. In spring there are 'primrose habitations' everywhere along the brook and by the hedgerows. *Campanula patula*, not a common but a beautiful blossom, abounds in summer. Earlier in the year, blue hyacinths, every here and there variegated by a few white blossoms, are abundant, while the pretty mauve-coloured blooms of meadow saffron delight the artist and disgust the farmer. It is a very dangerous plant to cattle. Eglantines and briars reach down from the higher banks and trail over the water, or clasp

the neighbouring boughs for support. It may easily be conceived that these ivy-hung bowers form a paradise for a naturalist. He seldom passes by without noting some bird or learning a little more of Nature's wise economy. His notes may not, indeed, attain the dignity of print and advance the cause of science, but they furnish him with an all-absorbing hobby, and provide much content and quiet happiness. Here, as elsewhere, the eye must first bring to the view something in itself; some taste for birds and flowers must be inherent in a man if these common sights and sounds of the country are to delight him. Country parsons, doctors, and all whose duties call them to rustic shades, should cultivate these placid tastes and this unruffled contemplation. It is wise to be dependent upon such simple pleasures for recreation, especially after the meridian of life is passed. Herein White and Walton have deserved well of their fellow-countrymen. They have shown what engrossing and perennial delights proceed from the exercise of energies on the familiar objects naturally suited for them, and taught that it is possible to enjoy country life without nursing the luxury of Nero and the ambition of Alexander dissatisfied with only one world to conquer. People do not sufficiently bear in mind that those who increase the stock of simple pleasures which can be easily obtained are the true benefactors of their fellow-men. And so the 'Compleat Angler' and Gilbert White's placid wisdom will be read when the highly flavoured romances of the age shall have completely perished from the earth.

M. G. WATKINS.

At the Sign of the Ship.

THE amusement of drawing up imaginary lists of an imaginary Academy was invented, perhaps, by Mr. Matthew Arnold. Some members of the British Public have lately tried their hands at it—their hands already expert at making amateur Cabinets, ideal Elevens of All England, lists of the best places to buy groceries at, of the best schools, the best doctors, the best parsons, and so forth. The discussion is perfectly harmless, and, with the aid of the names of writers on the covers of the *Nineteenth Century*, considerable excellence may be attained in the sport of Academy-making. But the game, as at present played, is not conducted with the rigour of the game. The sportsmen put down the names of people who, they think, should belong to an Academy, if we were cursed with such an Institution. But the true sport would be to mention the names of the persons who would be among the Immortals if we had possessed (or been possessed by) an Academy as long as the French have endured theirs. If the educated public could vote for forty painters to be made R.A.'s, how many of the names of the actual Forty would be found in the list? Not many, I fancy. Nor would many of the names of persons of letters, such as the ladies who rejoice in these competitions delight to honour, be found in a real, self-elected Academy. There would be plenty of literary lords, plenty of bishops, plenty of popular preachers, plenty of statesmen, plenty of men of science, of world-wide reputation, whom you and I never heard the names of in our days. And there would be various well-connected and well-meaning mediocrities, and the working-men of the pen and the lamp would be howling and gnashing their teeth outside the English Academy. But I think a few classical scholars, real scholars, men the public never hears of, would be on the right side of the door, for all things have their compensations, and even an Academy would not be an evil absolutely unadulterated.

Among the complaints and murmurs of the learned, it is a comfort to come across an Author perfectly satisfied with his Publisher, Printer, Paper-maker, and with himself. Such an Author was Ménage, or Ægidius Menagius, as he called himself (being a *savant en us*) on the title-page of

ÆGIDII MENAGII

POËMATA.

QUARTA EDITIO

Auctor et emendator,

AMSTELODAMI,

Ex officina Elzeviriana.

M. DC. LXIII.

This good little chirpy Pedant (perhaps, as Pascal says, only Pedants use the word Pedant, so let us say) this good little literary man wrote a poem

AD

DANIELEM ELZEVIRIUM

BIBLIOPOLAM AMSTELODAMENSEM.

I marvel that Mr. Brander Matthews did not translate the hendecasyllabics for his *Ballads of Books*. Here is a rude attempt at a version.

TO DANIEL ELZEVIR.

What do I see! Oh Gods divine
And Goddesses,—this Book of mine,—
This child of many hopes and fears,—
Is published by the Elzevirs!
Oh perfect Publishers complete!
Oh dainty volume, new and neat!
The Paper doth outshine the snow,
The Print is blacker than the crow,
The Title-Page, with crimson bright,
The vellum cover smooth and white,
All sorts of readers do invite,
Ay, and will keep them reading still,
Against their will, or with their will!
Thus what of grace the Rhymes may lack
The Publisher has given them back,

AT THE SIGN OF THE SHIP.

As Milliners adorn the fair
Whose charms are something skimp and spare.

Oh *dulce decus*, Elzevirs!
The pride of dead and dawning years.
How can a poet best repay
The debt he owes your House to-day?
May this round world, while aught endures,
Applaud, and buy, these books of yours!
May purchasers incessant pop,
My Elzevirs, within your shop,
And learned bards salute, with cheers,
The volumes of the Elzevirs,
Till your renown fills earth and sky,
Till men forget the Stephani,
And all that Aldus wrought, and all
Turnebus sold in shop or stall,
While still may Fate's (and Binders') shears
Respect, and spare, the Elzevirs!

I added the last two lines out of my own head: the original ends thus:—

*sic decus Elzevirianum
Doctorum volitans per ora vatum,
Terras impleat, impleatque cælum.
Turnebos simul atque Vascosanos
Et vincas Stephanos, Manutiosque!*

* * *

Turning over the books at the sale of Baron de Seillièr's Library (ah, what a library—not a book anyone wants to read, and almost all in splendid bindings!), I came on Colletet's 'Epigrammes: avec un discours de l'Epigramme,' 8vo. Paris: J. B. Loyson, 1653. Opening this I encountered Colletet's address to his library, also not unworthy of a place in *Ballads of Books*. The volume seems to be rare, and I give the epigram.

A MES LIVRES.

Cheres delices de mon ame,
Gardez-vous bien de me quitter,
Quoiqu'on vienne vous emprunter,
Chacun de vous m'est une femme,
Qui peut se faire voir sans blame,
Et ne se doit jamais prester.

*My Books, my heart's delight, beware
Of quitting the domestic shelves!
I say when folk would bid me lend,
'My books are wives to me, my friend;
You may admire them, if you care;
But no, they never lend themselves!'*

* * *

Colletet was of Charles Nodier's mind :

*Tel est le triste sort de tout livre prêté;
Souvent il est perdu, toujours il est gâté!*

*Such is the fate of borrowed books: they're lost,
Or not the Book returneth, but its Ghost!*

* * *

The following poem I confess that I did not understand without the aid of some comments by the author, who was kind enough to act as her own scholiast. You must know that in this (visibly imperfect) world we are living in space of Three Dimensions. I thought it was *four*, not being scientific myself, but Miss May Kendall says *three*, and mathematical people almost unanimously confirm her statement. Very well, life in Three-dimensioned space being undeniably rather a failure, it is presumed that people who live in Four-dimensioned space are perfectly happy, and find everything for the best in the best of worlds. The poem describes the dream of a dweller in that heavenly country, who gains a vision of our 'one-horse' and three-dimensioned planet. The dreamer describes our miserable condition to his lady, in a land where all love is true love, and the course of true love always does run smooth. We cannot conceive such a state of things, and he finds it equally hard to describe a world all at sixes and sevens, like ours.

* * *

A PURE HYPOTHESIS.

Ah, love, the teacher we decried,
That erudite professor grim,
In mathematics drenched and dyed,
Too hastily we scouted him.
He said: 'The bounds of Time and Space,
The categories we revere,
May be in quite another case
In quite another sphere.'

AT THE SIGN OF THE SHIP.

He told us: 'Science can conceive
 A race whose feeble comprehension
 Can't be persuaded to believe
 That there exists our Fourth Dimension,
 Whom Time and Space for ever baulk;
 But of these beings incomplete,
 Whether upon their heads they walk
 Or stand upon their feet—

We cannot tell, we do not know,
 Imagination stops confounded;
 We can but say "It *may* be so,"
 To every theory propounded.'
 Too glad were we in this our scheme
 Of things, his notions to embrace,—
 But—I have dreamed an awful dream
 Of *Three-dimensioned* Space!

I dreamed—the horror seemed to stun
 My logical perception strong,
 That everything beneath the sun
 Was *so unutterably wrong*.
 I thought—what words can I command?—
 That *nothing ever did come right*.
 No wonder *you* can't understand:
 I could not, till last night!

I would not, if I could, recall
 The horror of those novel heavens,
 Where Present, Past, and Future all
 Appeared at sixes and at sevens,
 Where Capital and Labour fought,
 And, in the nightmare of the mind,
 No contradictories were thought
 As truthfully combined!

Nay, in that dream-distorted clime,
 These fatal wilds I wandered through,
 The boundaries of Space and Time
 Had got most frightfully askew.
 'What is "askew"?' my love, you cry;
 I cannot answer, can't portray;
 A universe that's all awry
 No language can convey.

I can't tell what my words denote,
 I know not what my phrases mean ;
 Inexplicable terrors float
 Before this spirit once serene.
 Ah, what if on some lurid star
 There should exist a hapless race,
 Who live and love, who think and are,
 In Three-dimensioned Space !

M. K.

It is, indeed, a melancholy vision, and perhaps contains as good an explanation as another of the Origin of Evil. According to a geometrical enthusiast, it is only by 'the casting out of self' that we can even conceive of Four-dimensioned Space, and, if mankind could universally cast out self, how happy we might all become ! But what a terrible planet that would be which was peopled (like Ulster) by 'an evil colony' of our expelled selves—a colony of Mr. Hydes !

* * *

To return from this excursion into the unexplored regions of Moral Mathematics, what a delightful writer on books does France possess in M. Henri Beraldi ! Neither the late Mr. John Hill Burton, nor the 'dreadful Dibdin,' as an American amateur calls him, had even the beginnings of such a pleasant style of *causerie* as M. Henri Beraldi. Happy are the book-men who possess his rare little volume, *Bibliothèque d'un Bibliophile* ; happier they who have his *Mes Estampes*, of which M. Conquet has just published another hundred, for the joy of Pantagruelists, *et non aultres*. M. Beraldi's catalogue of his engravings includes illustrated books—and anecdotes. The most astonishing of all sales of engravings, he says, was that of M. W——, a Government office clerk, in 1880. M. W—— collected, here and there, and picked up what cheap curiosities came in his way. The time came when he was superannuated, and then he thought of selling his engravings. He had paid about 150*l.* or 200*l.* for the lot. They were sent to the auction room, and fetched over 4,000*l.* Here was an investment, and an investment which it was pleasant as well as profitable to make. M. Beraldi mentions a book for which he declined to give 250 francs in 1872, and presently found himself buying for 4,000, so rapidly did prices rise when prosperity returned after the war. He bought, however, more than a hundred examples of Moreau's work in beautiful 'states'

for 250 francs, an amazing piece of good fortune; but then 1,500 francs had to be paid for the few last pieces wanted to make up the set. M. Beraldi raises a point of casuistry. If a man who cannot read offered you a lot of railway shares for a few pounds, you would, of course, tell him to get the proper price on the Stock Exchange. But if a poor cheap bookseller offers you a marvel of scarcity for five shillings, why—you generally take him at his word. A bookseller once told me, when I said some bargain was too good, that only one other buyer had ever offered to pay a higher price than that charged. Probably nine readers out of ten will guess the name of that despiser of political economy. But I doubt if this kind of unscientific readiness to give a fair price is so very rare. Happily one is seldom, or never, tempted. Besides, the seller has made his percentage of profit, and is, apparently, glad to let his customers have a bargain now and then. It encourages them. And in these late days, when everything is collected, we are so seldom encouraged. M. Beraldi's book contains a picture in words of that famed and ill-famed English collector, lately dead, who made Paris his home, and of whom it is said that even the booksellers *le recevaient sans enthousiasme*. To a humble looker-on at those great epic battles of the auction room it is pleasant to find that M. Beraldi does not disdain books bound by Simier, Thouvenin, and Bozérian. An American amateur and critic pities me for once having called them great binders. What was good enough for Charles Nodier, and is good enough for M. Beraldi, is good enough for me. But people have become so fastidious about bindings, above all so fanatically devoted to the memory of Trautz, that M. Beraldi thinks it sagacious to have books merely *cartonnés*. Otherwise your friends have each his peck at the tooling, gilding, back, sides, edges, and the rest of it.

* * *

How long it takes a foreign author, especially if he is not a 'naturalistic' novelist, to get a hearing from an alien public! People often doubt whether critics are of any use for any purpose; their apologist might maintain that, at least, they can sometimes introduce new foreign authors to the domestic public. France gives us few better things than her critics, with their delicacy, wit, probity, learning, and respect for the profession which we perhaps respect too little. Since Sainte-Beuve ceased to charm us once a week, France has had no better critic than M. Jules Lemaitre. His essays are published in volumes, *Les Contemporains*, of which the third has just appeared. The *Athenæum*

dismisses this admirable volume in four lines, as a collection of biographies of contemporary novelists! Who could guess that Gaston Paris is a contemporary novelist? To him M. Lemaître's most valuable study is dedicated, among others on M. Richepin, the Goncourts, M. Soulayr, the Duc d'Aumale, M. Bourget, and so forth. But it is M. Lemaître's note on the *Ballade* (vol. i. p. 19) that I wish to borrow, for a purpose, to-day.

* * *

'The poet who begins a ballade,' says M. Lemaître, 'does not know very exactly what he will put into it: the Rhyme, and nothing but the Rhyme, will whisper things unexpected and charming, things he would never have thought of but for her, things with strange and remote relations to each other, all united in the disorder of a dream. Nothing, indeed, is richer in suggestion than the strict laws of these difficult pieces; they force the fancy to wander afield, hunting high and low, and while she seeks through all the world the foot that can wear Cinderella's slipper, she makes delightful discoveries by the way.'

* * *

M. Lemaître's good-humoured appreciation of the *Ballade* may serve as introduction to a ballade of Mr. Clinton Scollard's, a young American poet, whose Alma Mater is Harvard. I copy it from a pleasant book, *With Reed and Lyre*, published by Messrs. Lothrop, of Boston. There are greater things in it than what follows; for example, a delightful little *Orientale* (M. Lemaître, by a coincidence, has written a volume named *Petites Orientales*), 'As I came down from Lebanon.' Here followeth Mr. Clinton Scollard's

FOR ME THE BLITHE BALLADE.

Of all the songs that dwell
Where softest speech doth flow,
Some love the sweet rondel,
And some the bright rondeau.
With rhymes that tripping go,
In mirthful measures clad;
But would I choose them?—no,
For me the blithe Ballade!

O'er some the villanelle,
That sets the heart aglow,
Doth its enchanting spell
With lines recurring throw;

AT THE SIGN OF THE SHIP.

Some weighed with wasting goe
 Gay triplets make glad;
 But would I choose them?—no,
 For me the blithe Ballade!

On *Chant* with stately swell
 With measured feet and slow,
 As grave as minster bell
 At vesper tolling low,
 Do some their praise bestow;
 Some on *sestinas* sad;
 But would I choose them?—no,
 For me the blithe Ballade!

ENVOY.

Prince, to these songs a-row,
 The Muse might endless add,
 But would I choose them?—no,
 For me the blithe Ballade!

One might wish more variety in the penultimate line of each stanza, which here is part of the refrain; but the whole thing is pretty and ingenious, and the author can write more seriously in other moods and measures.

A. LANG.

The 'Donna.'

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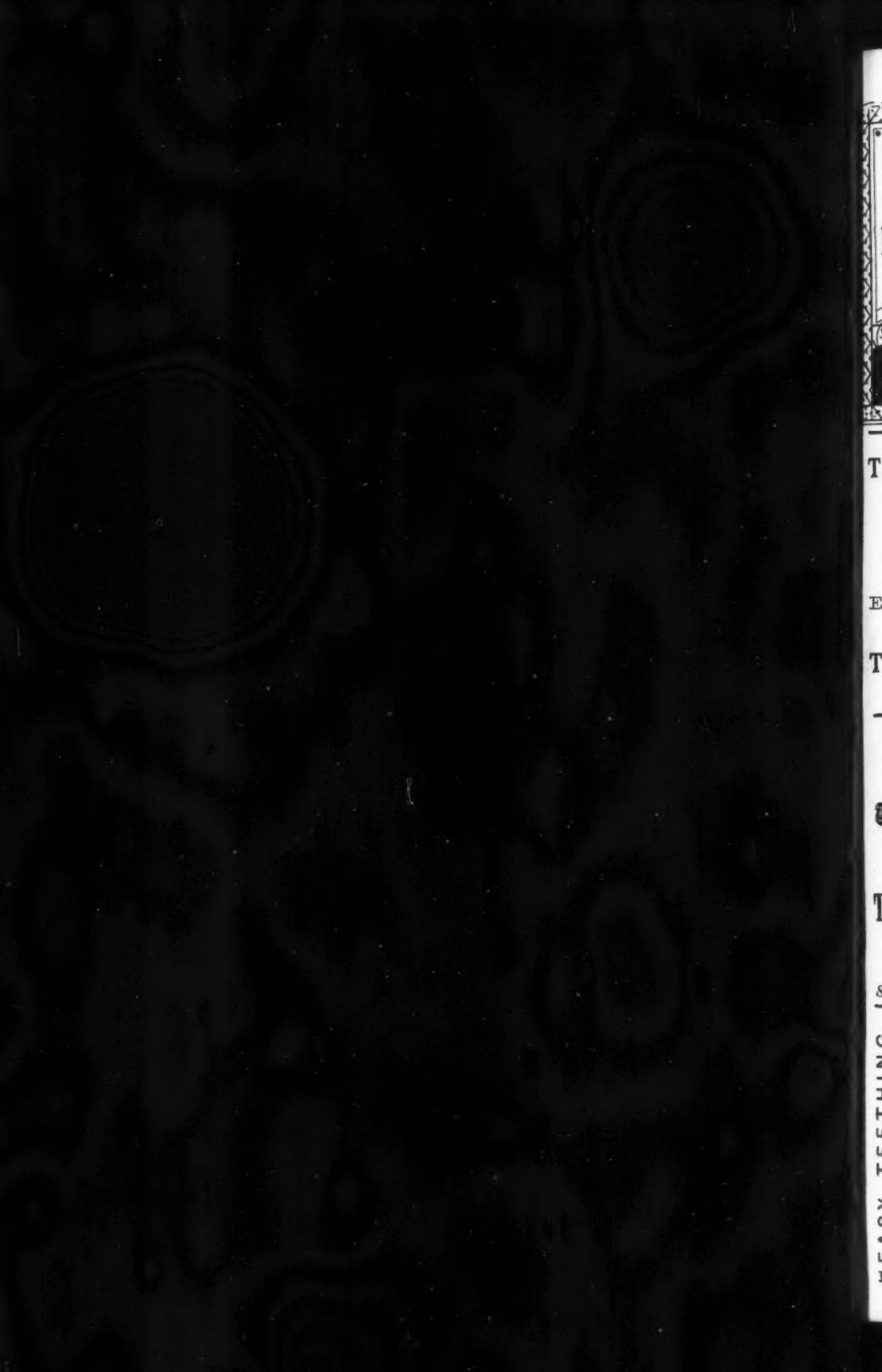
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